

Span of hand = 220mm

Black Eagle ♂
3560 grammes
9.7.06.

0 8cm.
Scale = 1 to 1.

MEWS VIEWS

VOL. 6 2008

JOURNAL OF THE
SOUTH AFRICAN FALCONRY ASSOCIATION

JK 2008.

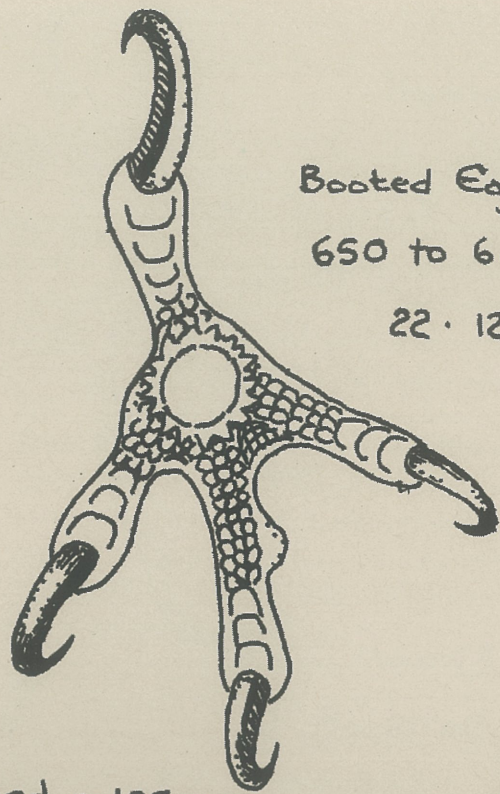


نادي صياري الامارات
EMIRATES FALCONERS' CLUB

Mikro
TrackPack
Scout
Field Marshall
RT Plus
RT Standard

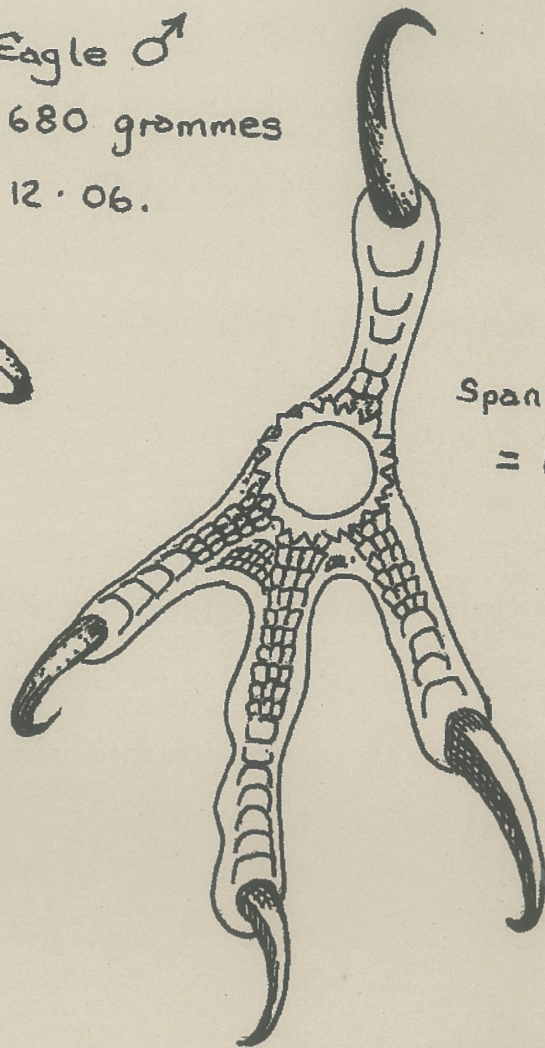
WORLD CLASS TELEMETRY

To order call 801-936-9000 or visit us online at marshallradio.com



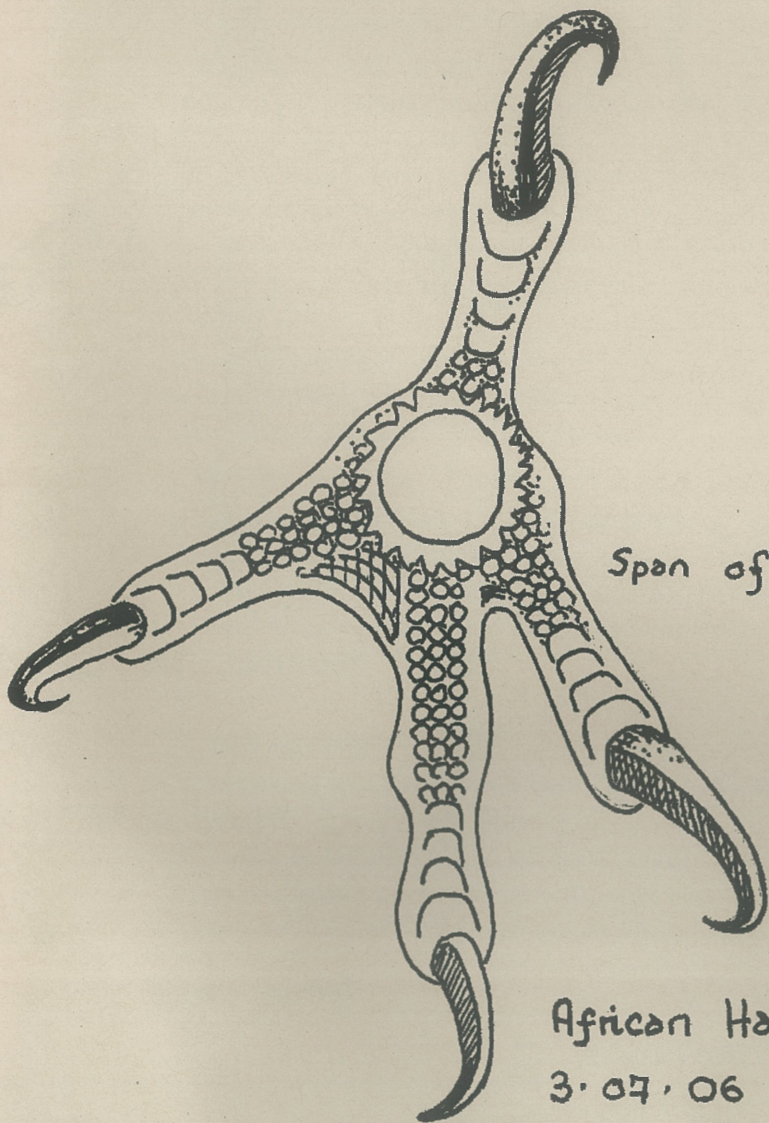
Booted Eagle ♂
650 to 680 grammes
22. 12. 06.

Span of hand = 105 mm.



Span of hand
= 141 mm

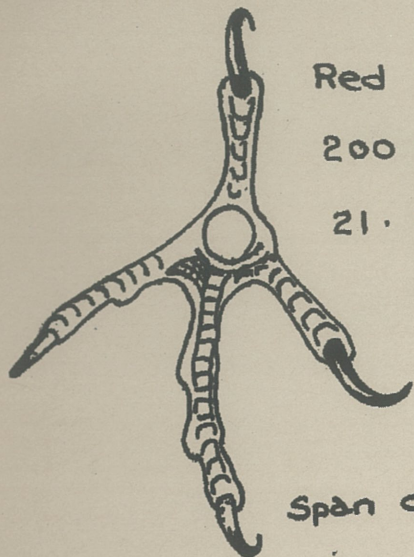
Ayres' Hawk-Eagle ♀
3. 07. 06.
900 grammes.



Span of hand = 150 mm.

0 ————— 3cm
Scale = 1 to 1

African Hawk-Eagle ♀
3. 07. 06 1550 grammes



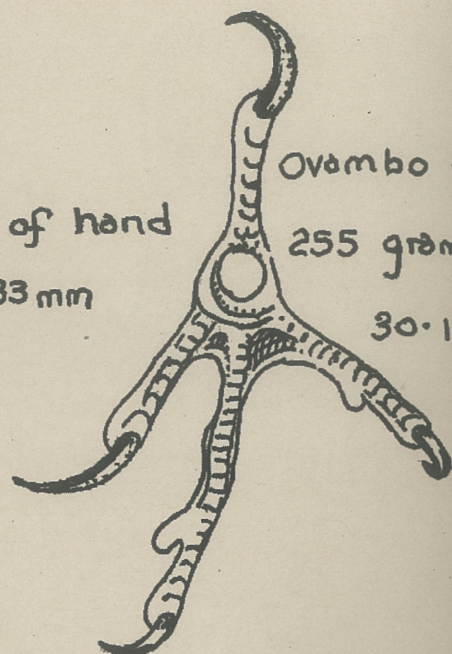
Red Breasted Sparrowhawk.

200 to 220 grammes

21. 12. 06.

Span of hand

73mm.



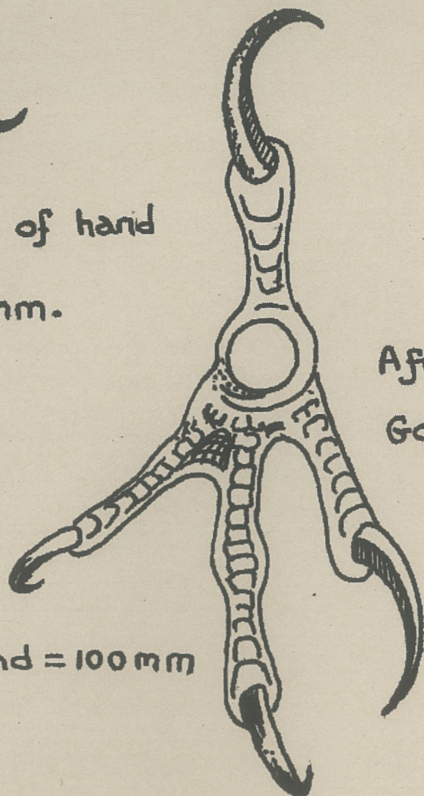
Ovambo ♀

255 grammes

30. 12. 07.

Span of hand

= 83mm



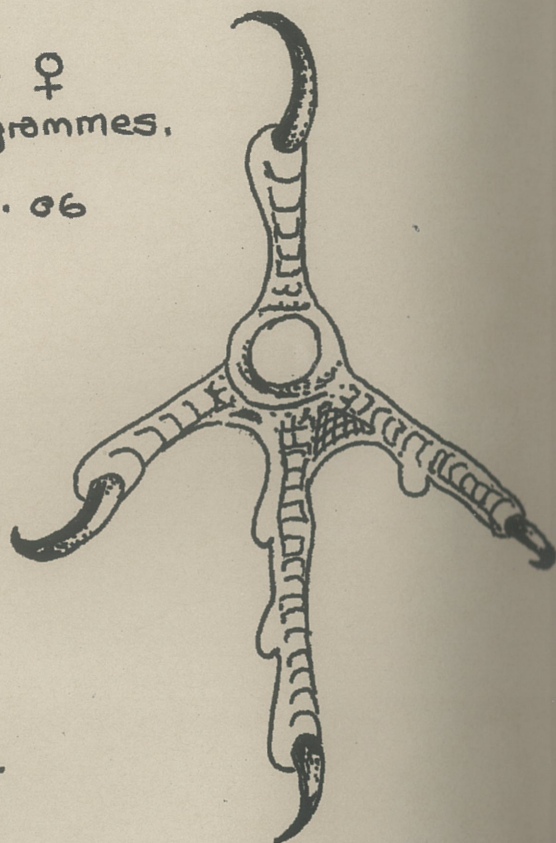
African

Goshawk ♀

340 grammes.

3. 7. 06

Span of hand = 100mm



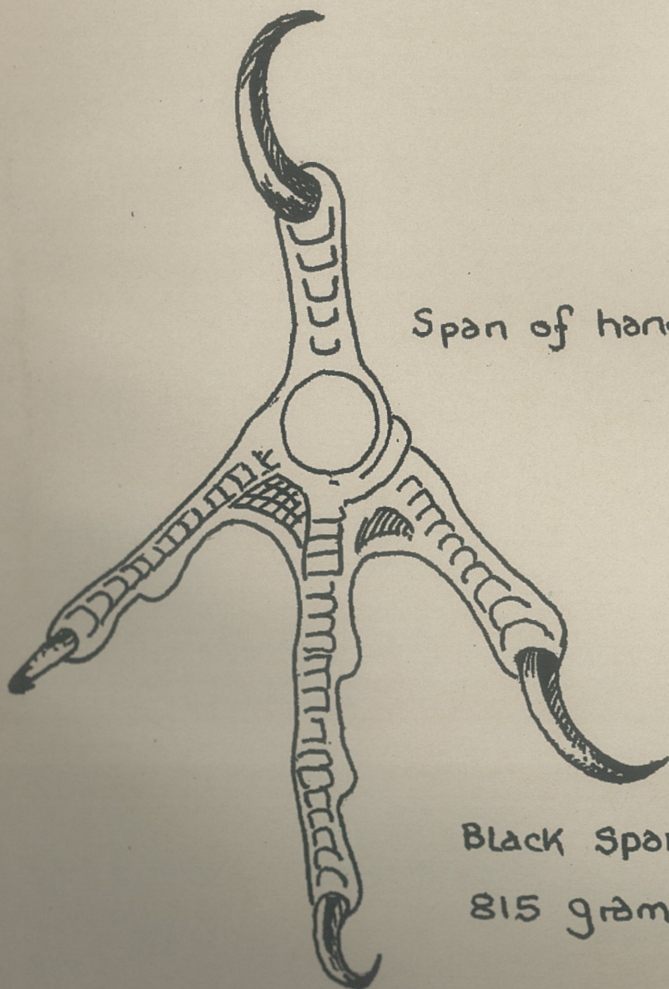
Black Musket 26. 12. 06

490 grammes

Span of hand = 107mm

0 5cm

Scale 1 to 1.



Black Sparrowhawk ♀

815 grammes 30. 12. 06

HC 2008.

CONTENTS

Editorial.....	3
Regional Reports.....	4
Boland Falconry Club	4
Cape Falconry Club Report	5
Eastern Cape Falconry Club	6
Free State Falconry Club	7
Transvaal Falconry Club - Gauteng.....	7
Limpopo Falconers Club.....	10
Mpumalanga Falconry Club	13
Natal Falconry Club.....	15
The North West Hawking Club	16
Tales of a Lost Hawk #1	17
Penryn Falconry Club Report: 2007	18
Extract from the CHASA Newsletter #1/2008.	21
South African Falconry Association Annual Report to the International Association for Falconry, 2007.....	22
Presentation to the Bird of Prey Working Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust - 2008.....	24
Notice of a Publication.....	29
Recipe for Scrambled {Scribbled} Hare.....	29
Tales of a Lost Hawk #2	31
Accipiter Training Using the Mc Dermott Way with the Hack.....	31
Penryn Goshawks do it again.....	37
Novel approaches to some Falcon Diseases	39
Foot design and what it tells you about a Hawk	41
The Poisoning of Raptors and other Conspiracies.....	44
Strategy for Falconry, Research and Conservation.....	46
When to Let Go.....	51
Case discussion: Nematode infection	53
Zimbabwe, a New Experience	55
First International Falconry Festival.....	56
Hunting With the African Hawk Eagle (<i>Hieraaetus Spilogaster</i>) In Zimbabwe.	59
Hunting with a Male Lanner Falcon	68
Avian Bullets, Peregrine Falcons in the Savannah	71
Observations on Black Sparrowhawk behaviour around Their Nest Site.....	76
Implications of the New Threatened or Protected Species Regulations for Falconry .	78

Please note that the views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the opinions of SAFA or of the Editor.

Thanks are expressed to all contributors, without whom this publication could not exist. Thanks also to those who have contributed photographs. Please note that that the source of photos is not generally acknowledged in this publication. Editor.

SPONSORS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN FALCONRY
ASSOCIATION FIELD MEET – 2008
HOSTING THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
FALCONRY A.G.M.

The Emirates Falconry Club
Marshall Radio-Telemetry
Health and Hygiene (Pty) Ltd
Upland Organic Estate Wines
Karoo Gold
Merlin Systems Inc.
Roger Neilson – Artwork
Ray Thompson
Mark Labuschagne – Plumbers
Graham Anderson
Brian Anderson
Jim Green Footwear
Bertus and Lizette Beukes
National Bird of Prey Center
Kyle Somes
Anton Muller
Tim Wagner



A number of donations were made by individuals and organizations that were too late to include before publication. We apologize to these donors and thank them for their very generous assistance

SAFA thanks these organizations and individuals for their generous support, without which we would be unable to stage this memorable event. We urge our membership to recognize this contribution and to support our friends.

EDITORIAL

When we look back upon the 2008 SAFA Meet, where we host the IAF, we may recall this event in various ways. If we look back and say "that was the finest time", it is somewhat sad that we cannot develop or advance from that point. If we were to say "That is where it started.", we would be wrong, as this process started many years ago and we are seeing the product of the efforts and dreams of many people, over time. If we look back and say "That was a high point that advanced our Art," then this Meet will have achieved all that we could wish of it.

So, I have attempted to produce a Mews Views that is representative of falconry in Southern Africa, that celebrates our past, showcases innovative thought and looks to our future. We cannot shirk the storm clouds on the horizon, but our achievements and alliances must give us the confidence that we can confront and weather them. Falconry sits in a niche between hunting and conservation, where we can, through our efforts, be a Flagship for Conservation through Sustainable Use.

Ron Hartley was one of the great figures of Falconry in our region and SAFA 2008 is, at least in part, the fruit of his efforts. So this Mews Views must include a commemoration of him. With the assistance of his daughter and widow, I have included articles that demonstrate his place as a falconer (59), that show how he could reach out to the general public as an ambassador for Falconry and Raptors, (71) and his Vision for Falconry and its role in Conservation (46). I have included an article by a young falconer that commemorates his legacy and spirit. (55)

But, we must look to the present and to the future. There are articles which look at the philosophy of falconry (51), examine the way that we, as falconers look at hawks and asses them (41). We re-look at training methods (31) and examine the import of new legislation (78). The opportunity is also taken to showcase some of our scientific and conservation efforts. Never the less, there is also some fun as we can join George McAlister in his culinary efforts and there are other tales of hunts and excitement.

It is a great milestone for our region, to host the IAF AGM, and we are thrilled to welcome falconers from many parts of the world. It is important to recognize, that through our hospitality, we encourage and support the efforts of this valued organization. I will leave you with the words of one of my personal falconry icons and first President of the IAF, as they epitomize what this Meet is all about:

"May I end with an appeal to all individual falconers.....to do their utmost to conduct the sport of falconry in such a way as to demonstrate to ornithologists, biologists, conservationists, sportsmen, landowners, government departments, and all other interested parties that falconry is not only a time-honored but a noble and reputable sport; and that the falconers who practice it are respectable and responsible people who know more and care more about birds of prey than anyone else and are passionately devoted to the real long term interests of birds of prey everywhere in the world."

Jack Mavrogordato

Adrian Lombard
April 2008

REGIONAL REPORTS

Boland Falconry Club

The past season reflected limited participation and ended with a few unfortunate matters. It proved that the club's management procedures, in place, were fair, efficient and effective.

A complaint was received via Adrian Lombard from the SPCA on the status and condition of a Jackal Buzzard flown by Mr. E Venter. On receipt of the complaint, the matter with the presented evidence was formalized and managed through the disciplinary process. The member was found guilty and his membership was terminated. In accordance with the findings, the buzzard in his possession had to be returned to a club member. Mr. Venter just never responded to any correspondence to return the buzzard. CapeNature was informed and presented with all documentation relating to the hearing and findings of the matter and requested to act as they directly issued the permit to the member.

Months later, another complaint was received, via Adrian Lombard from the SPCA as to the deteriorating condition of the buzzard. The matter was swiftly followed up and it was found that CapeNature never acted against Mr. Venter. Eventually the buzzard was handed to Hank Chalmers, at Spier.

Annually, I apply for the permit related to the Performing Animals Act, as at times I am invited by schools to talk on raptors. Interestingly enough, I have had this permit for about 10 years and the permit application is handled by the Magistrates Court, in the region of your residence. The procedure is actually very simple in that you submit your application to the magistrates' Court, which, in the past handed the application on to the S.A. Police to investigate your facilities in terms of the act. Then, about 2 years ago, the S.A. Police stopped doing the inspections and the Animal Anti-Cruelty League was mandated to do the inspections. With my last application, the SPCA did the inspection. This is of concern to me, as per their field officer they do not favor falconry and this could affect future applications.

Finally all falconers are ambassadors of their art and their clubs. Always act responsibly and accountably and this will secure this ancient art for generations to come.

Falconry:

Johan Botes flew a Peregrine Falcon, Tracy, taking Yellow billed Duck, Cape and Red billed Teal.

Wehahn Geldenhuys did not hunt but rehabbed 1 Black shouldered Kite, 2 Steppe Buzzards and 1 Black Spar.

Corne Strydom took up a Pale Chanting Goshawk but this died of Newcastle's Disease as shown at Post-mortem.

Wehahn Geldenhuys

Cape Falconry Club Report

2007 proved to be a very interesting year in the Cape. Like most clubs, we have our ups and downs, but I am glad to report that most of the year consisted of falconers doing what they do best - chasing the hell out of everything and trying not to break their necks in the bush! The majority of the club flies short-wings. This is in most part due to our thick cover and quarry range, but those who flew long-wings did so in fine style.

George Buttery and I had heaps of fun flying a cast of young female Harris Hawks at hares and Guineafowl. Whilst hunting rabbits at night they were flown independently, but when hunting Guineafowl they were flown as a cast. It was amazing to see how these birds started to work together, with my bird taking the low road and George's bird doing the aerial assaults. A Harris Hawk is a tremendous hawk to fly - easy, sociable and, as a UK friend of mine put it, "When finished hunting, give the bird the keys and he will find his own way home." Our future goal with these birds is to assist Cape Nature in the eradication of the Indian House Crow, which has moved into the Cape. Just like Indian Minors and Starlings, they have taken to eating off the verges in the industrial areas, which gives us the opportunity to hunt them from vehicles.

Our annual falconry meet was a complete wash-out, with the rain being so bad that many vehicles couldn't even get to the chalets where we were staying. In true hardcore falconry fashion, many of us found alternative accommodation and ended up having a great time hunting Greywing, Cape Francolin and Ducks. I believe that some of the best flying to be seen was with Edmund's Hybrid on Yellowbilled Duck. That bird is truly awesome!

We had a complete change-over in office bearers at our last AGM. Reluctantly, we accepted Adrian Lombard's resignation as Chairman, but we made sure he wasn't going too far as he is still our SAFA Representative. Our new office bearers are as follows: Chairman - Hank Chalmers; Secretary - John Stuart; SAFA Representative - Adrian Lombard; Treasurer - Reiner Kraus and Ringing/Website - Kevin Hershaw. We have also appointed a Grading Committee which consists of Edmond Oettle, Kevin Hershaw and Alan Woodford. I believe that we have a great team and the guys have already started taking us into the future by creating a communal website, whereby all relevant information concerning the club can be processed. Furthermore, Adrian Lombard has been elected Secretary to the IAF, which is well-deserved given his dedication to falconry around the world.

We have observed a good number of young falconers coming through the system. It is always good to see the enthusiasm and untapped energy of these youngsters. We must always remember that the future of falconry lies in the hands of those we teach today, so let's do it right. Seven of our new recruits have passed their exams and are flying African Goshawks. With the increase of youngsters, we will be re-introducing our annual "Afgos Meet", which is dedicated to the C-grade falconer.

In conclusion, we are looking forward to 2008 and our annual pilgrimage to SAFA. Good Hawking!

Hank Chalmers

Eastern Cape Falconry Club

Club President Alan Harvey

Members: Andrew Pringle
Arnold Slabbert
Mathew Hardwick

The past season only two falconers have actively flown birds. The other members were inactive for a variety of reasons. Arnold Slabbert flew a three year old imprint female peregrine of mine at the start of the season before she came back to me in June. Arnold then took over a six year old hacked falcon that had been sitting in a breeding pen for a few years and flew her at redwing francolin and later at duck with great success. This bird has immaculate manners and took an excellent pitch. Arnold will fly her again next season. Arnold still heads up the rehab centre Wildline and does good work in this field.

I flew my old passage peregrine again this season and she accounted for a good number of duck in her usual polished style. This was her 5th season and her attitude towards me seems to deteriorate each year, only her big pitch and aggression on duck and my inability to find a suitable replacement passage have kept her on the block. This following season will probably be her last with me. My once intermewed hacked female peregrine was flown at the beginning of the season but did not live up to the expectations I had for her so she was hacked back in July.

My peregrine breeding project produced two eyases, both of which were hacked back to the wild. The tiercel is still returning to roost in the trees around the house now in March. I never see him during the day; he arrives at his selected roost tree at last light and disappears again at dawn. I also received the whole brood of peregrine eyases from the urban eyrie in PE as they once again ended up in the taxi rank below. This year there were two tiercels and two falcons. They were placed at hack with my two. I also had my imprint female out with the hopes that she would foster the youngsters. She unfortunately alternatively chased and was chased by the eyases around the sky. The PE birds were already 56 days old when they arrived so there were some anxious moments at the release, however all turned out well and they all successfully flew and dispersed after 5 weeks.

We have managed to sort out a wild take with Nature Conservation and we have a good working relationship with only a few matters that still have to be sorted out.

Alan Harvey

Free State Falconry Club

Anton Muller – Flew fantastic passage Lanner on grouse

Angelo Grobler – Flew Gyr-Peregrine hybrid on ducks

Callie Smit – new member, obtained his first afgos

Johan Cronje – new member, obtained first afgos

Francois Breedt – Flew Zin Zan and eyass Peregrine from Steven Squires

Leige Strapp – Flew a afgos

Carel de Jager- flew an afgos

Gregg Mousley – flew passage lanner

Gert Pretorius – still overseas '07

Steve Lodge – Flew African Hawk Eagle

Trevor Oertel – Flew European female and tiercel peregrine

James Oertel – Flew imprint African peregrine

James du Toit – Black spar female

Francois Breedt

Transvaal Falconry Club - Gauteng

Despite the soaring cost of fuel and the increased distances Gauteng falconers have to travel to hunt their birds, a significant number of guys are still getting out on a regular (if not daily basis) and experiencing some good hawking. The falconers flying small shortwings in urban areas have been less affected but anyone flying Black spars or longwings will have noticed how much lighter their wallets are lately.

The club has had a number of youngsters join, both boys and girls, whom have progressed well in their apprenticeships. What remains to be seen is if they stand the test of time and are still around in 10 years time.

Falconry

By far the most popular shortwing being flown at the moment is the robust and versatile African Goshawk.

Brian Anderson inherited a male Af Gos when Shane Phitidies and family went back to the States. This little bird is very gutsy and flies and binds to almost anything that flushes including full-grown guinea fowl, francolin and dikkops. He has managed to hold onto almost fully-grown swainsons francolin and pullet guinea fowl 3-4 times his weight. He is deadly on the normal fare of plovers, doves, minors and other LBJ's. Brian has passed this bird onto a new member, Danie van der Mecht, who successfully completed his apprenticeship on a kestrel. Danie continues to harass the bird in the neighborhood and it sounds like he is having immense fun. In turn Brian has acquired a hand-me-down female Black Spar. The time and effort he has invested in the bird is now paying dividends and the bird has become a competent hunting partner.

Colin Williams has put his old trusty female Af Goshawk into a breeding project and now has a new female out of the Mpumalanga breeding project. Last I heard the bird was training well and on the brink of starting to hunt.

The Prytz sisters, Bronwyn and Jennifer both have Af Goshawks, Bronwyn's intermewed bird from last year and Jennifer doing her apprenticeship with a bird out of Leon Hageman's breeding project.

Leon Haveman's Af gos is still not finished moulting at the time of writing but his Lanner tiercel is doing well on the kite. By all accounts the bird will go up 1500ft in the warm afternoon air and waits on pretty tight.

Johan van der Merwe is busy training his new Af goshawk under the guidance of Charles Jones and Leon. Bird is responding well to fist and lure at time of writing and about to be entered.

Dian Karstens has trained a really good-looking female Af Goshawk out of Leon's breeding project. This bird accounted for numerous quail and other birds before being passed on to another new falconer. Dian has taken over a female Ovambo Sparrowhawk and is pleased with her progress. It has been sometime that an Ovambo has been employed for falconry in Gauteng (or SA) and this bird should inspire more urban falconers to take one up.

Pieter Rabie will take to the fields with his many times intermewed Af Goshawk again as soon as she is finished the moult.

Ronnie Watt has a female peregrine out of Tim Wagner's project and the bird is waiting on at good height and flying pigeons but has yet to take wild quarry. His lanners wing injured last season seems to have recovered

Grant has had a bad start to the season with two of his peregrines – a young female and his high flying tiercel from last season dying in a flash flood that swept through

his property when over 100 mm of rain fell in less than half an hour. His intermewed falcon has just been taken up.

Mark Labuschagne is flying a Gyr/Rednape Shaheen and his intermewed African peregrine this season. This hybrid was one of three that Mark, Tim Wagner and Greg McBey imported from the UK. The bird has lots of potential and should make a duck hawk by the hunting season. The other two hybrids, Gyr/barbaries flown by Tim and Greg are/were high flying aggressive birds and certainly have a place in SA falconry. Unfortunately Greg's bird arrived with bumble foot and Greg has had an epic battle trying to resolve this problem. Tim's bird, although prone to fits was a good game hawk taking Sandgrouse on its second outing to Sandgrouse country. It also took a couple of partridge before the regularity and intensity of the fits got to such a stage that the bird was euthanized. A decision that was only made after consulting widely with people in the know and the fits having intensified to such an extent the bird was injuring itself.

Paul Strydom has a new female peregrine that is chasing hard but yet to take wild quarry. He will also be taking up his intermewed peregrine tiercels.

Charles Jones has a male and female peregrine falcon. Both birds are flying well and I am not sure what he has taken with them to date.

Dirk will be taking up his many times intermewed peregrine falcon when he returns from Brazil.

Tim Wagner will be flying a new peregrine falcon and a once intermewed falcon now that he has had to put down the hybrid. Both birds are strong on the wing and have taken a couple of head to date.

Lizette Beukes and Tiagrine Jones have flown kestrels successfully. They are anxiously waiting for Af Goshawks to become available so they can also get out and terrorize the local minor population

Breeding

Leon Haveman's African Goshawk project continues to be the backbone of the shortwing breeding and he fledged two chicks the past breeding season. His young pair that was successful last year failed to hatch and raise chicks this year. This year he intends candling eggs for fertility and manipulating eggs if necessary to meet the demand for these birds.

New pairs of Af Goshawks have been established at Dian Karstens and Grant Neale. Pieter Rabie still holds a pair that is yet to produce.

Grant Neale's peregrines, both minors and two pairs of anatum failed to produce but one pair raised chicks hatched from fertile eggs out of Tim Wagner's project.

Tim Wagner's peregrines produced 12 fertile eggs from 3 pairs. These 3 pairs raised nine and a pair of birds at Grant Neales fostered one clutch.

The Black Spars produced fertile eggs (2 clutches), which again failed to hatch. Chicks die just before pip yet when examined are found to be perfectly formed. Birds are on the same diet and breeding regime as the very successful peregrines so the cause is a mystery at the moment.

Tim also produced fertile hybrid eggs via artificial insemination after stripping his dark jerkin. Unfortunately, only one fledged, a very dark and beautiful female Gyr/Peregrine that is being flown by Francios Breedt. The other eggs failed to hatch as they were fostered under a young pair at Grant Neale's project that abandoned incubation at about 22-24 days. Very expensive school fees, but we will try again this season with a lot more knowledge and confidence.

Tim Wagner



Limpopo Falconers Club

The 2007 season started off with a field meet and hunt. All the hawks just completed the molt and looked great and ready to go. We camped on a farm 25 kilos out of Pietersburg. The farm, owned by Louis de Wet, normally has ample game birds for all our different hunting hawks, especially for the short wings. The area is open grassland with circle irrigated agricultural lands and a fair amount of tree lines. At times it could be very dry hence no luxuries like duck hawking.

With all our members present it was also the ideal time to hold the AGM. The meeting was opened with a prayer to firstly honour our Creator and showing deep respect for the opportunity to share our love for nature. The usual club affairs were discussed and the new committee voted in to manage for the 2007/2008 period: President Dawid Botes and Secretary Trevor Oertel. The rest of the committee consisted of Paul Venter, Dr. Lourens Coetzee and Etienne Hendricks. During the year Trevor, who lives in the OFS, resigned and was replaced by Dr. Lourens. Lourens who unfortunately also migrated and settled in Potchefstroom in the North West. Paul Venter agreed to stand in as secretary until the next AGM.

Needless to say we all had a great get together. Inventions and gimmicks were exchanged and Dawid gave a demonstration on how to perform a proper postmortem

on a raptor. Several head of game were taken and surely you guys missed the campfire stories of the day's hunt. Eventually it was only the real men, still competing stories with Hans Christian Anderson around the fire, whilst the pointers, dead tired, were sleeping around the campfire – looking like rugs at the fireplace back home. Ernst's Harris took off in the night. Luckily, Hendrik made sure with his 1000 watt flood light that she doesn't land nearby. Ernst, Flip, Rion and Tokka spent most of the night outside. That's what you call friends in need.

We normally do three field meets during the year. With all the young falconers in the camp it surely created an excellent opportunity to learn and watch other falconers flying and hunting their hawks. The Louis Trichardt falconers hosted the next great camp.

The camp was well organized with plenty to eat and lots of game birds. Three mambas also caused big excitement when we became aware of their presence and then realized we

were sharing the same camp. With the right contacts the Air Force Base nearby were on stand by with a chopper in case of snakebite. Anyhow while some negotiated the mambas Barend and his dad had a 15km hike with his ADHD African goshawk. This is an exceptionally mobile goshawk that takes to the sky like a Peregrine.

Great distances with members living all over Limpopo and the cost of fuel are most definitely a constraint for more get together.

Soon oil will hit the \$200 a barrel and our sport will feel the pain. Let's enjoy whilst we can still get out and fly our hawks.

The LFC is also very active in supplying Limpopo Environmental Affairs with hawk sightings and nesting areas. This is done on a fix grid mapping system. We are very fortunate in that we have a healthy working relationship with DEA. Dawid Botes also represent us on the Bird of Prey Working Group. It keeps us all up to date and well informed. Further more we also assist the local SPCA when hawks and owls in their care need attention. We have coached them how to handle and feed hawks. Dawid and Paul assisted two Black controlled farms, with the necessary information and business plans to farm their land economically and successful.

For us it is vitally important to be involved in the farming community to ensure hunting grounds for the future. We also lost some excellent farms due to Black farmers taking control.

The club's hunting season was ended with a smart dinner accompanied by our wives or girlfriends at Dawid's country home, just out of town. Now the ladies got an opportunity, not only to meet other falconer's wives, but also to see the hawks of the other falconers. The ladies were also awarded with a token of gratitude for putting up with birds, mutes and castings on their carpets, beds and other valuables.

The evening was ended with Videos and DVD's on hawking in general.

Hawks utilized in the club consist off: Peregrines, Lanners, Saker falcon, Black spars, African gosses, Gabars, Harris hawks and African Hawk Eagles. The club launched four breeding projects. Ettiene is breeding with the Jackal buzzard that he kindly got from Ben and African goshawks. Dawid and Lourens breed Harris hawks, and Flip, with great appreciation to Steven and Mark, breeds Black spars. Their birds are doing

well, thank you guys. Vlam is now officially the master of telemetry thanks to the Black spar he is taking care of.

With the excellent rain we enjoyed and the prolific breeding of the game birds the coming season can only be a bumper hunting season. At present there are 11 members in the LFC with Tokka (Rion jnr.) doing his conservation practical in Zimbabwe. We miss him. Although we have received various applications to join the club only few seem to pass the test of commitment and character during training.

Thank you, guys, for all your input and camaraderie.

Compiled by: **Paul Venter and Dawid Botes**



Limpopo Falconry



Mpumalanga Falconry Club

General

Although the MFC is one of the smaller clubs in South Africa, 2007 was a relatively good year with regards to falconry. Of the 13 falconers who made up the body of the club in 2007, only 8 members actively flew birds. During the 2007 hunting season various head of quarry were taken. These included various species of francolin, Thick Knee, quail, Guinea fowl and an assortment of LBJ's.

The MFC also played host to the annual SAFA meet which took place in chilly Dullstroom, July 2007. As many as 50 falconers (local, national, international) with at least 80 birds, were present at the meet. Falconers were entertained to some fantastic flights; (Black Eagle on geese and lanner falcon on duck) rekindled old friendships or made new friends. It was proposed that the 2008 IAF meet be held in Dullstroom but due to the lack of infrastructure and accessibility of quarry, it was decided to move it to the Free State Province (Bloemfontein)

Our relationship with the M.P.T.A. remains on a good footing with good communication and correspondence taking place between our chairman and their officials. The MPC is also, under the auspices of George Mc Allister, involved in an Outreach programme. George, with help of Camp Trevor (Waterval Boven) teaches kids from city schools the importance of conservation and the need to protect birds of prey. So far over 700 children have attended these talks.

Our C grade field meet was held at Camp Trevor attended by C grade members who put in some good hunting with their Af Gos's. they were also put through the mill with regards to general knowledge of falconry with a quiz set by Pat McAllister. Instruction and practice on imping was given and demonstrations on furniture making were also presented.

Breeding

Both pairs of George Mc Allister's African Peregrines laid eggs (7 in total) but all were infertile. Steve Van Rensburg's pair laid one egg which was also infertile. His African Goshawks, however, successfully raised three chicks.

Members and their birds

George Mc Allister: A grade

Flew his twice intermewed peregrine falcon and Cilla his 25 year old AHE. Presently he is flying a brand new captive bred peregrine falcon.

Steven Van Rensburg: A grade

Flew his twice intermewed peregrine falcon, Yzma.

Mark Holder: A grade

Flew an imprint female black spar but had to stop flying her as she injured herself when flying into a fence whilst hunting. Mark hopes to take up another spar in 2008.

Mark Bett: A grade

Mark flew his once intermewed tiecel peregrine with moderate success. This bird was eventually lost and he now hopes to take on an imprint black spar.

Gideon Stemmet: C grade

Flew a female Aft goes with great success in 2007. She was, however, tragically killed in a hunting accident, March 2008.

Josh Meaker: C grade

Flew a female Af gos with moderate success. A notable kill was a large rooster, which Joshua says was taken in fine style!

Duncan Roberson: C grade

Flew his 5th intermewed female Af gos with moderate success in 2007. She unfortunately succumbed to a liver disorder in early 2008.

Paul Fallone: C grade

Paul is a new member to the club and is presently flying a fine looking captive bred female Af gos.

Richard Huchzemeyer: C grade

Flew a rehab female gos with limited success in 2007. He now has a once intermewed passage musket gos which he intends flying in 2008.

MFC Committes for 2008

Chairman - George Mc Allister

Sec/ Tres - Pat Mc Allister

Add member - Paul Fallone

Grading

Steven Van Rensburg

Mark Holder

George Mc Allister

Disciplinary

Steven Van Rensburg

Mark Holder

Mark Bett

George McAllister

Natal Falconry Club

They say that time flies as you get older. Well I must be getting really old as it feels like yesterday that our secretary was hounding me to do last years report. As I stare out of my window [suffering from another case of writer's block] the Berg is blanketed by our first snow of 2008 and it is definitely time to start dusting off one or two hunting chickens and I trust that fellow falconers throughout the country are likewise occupied.

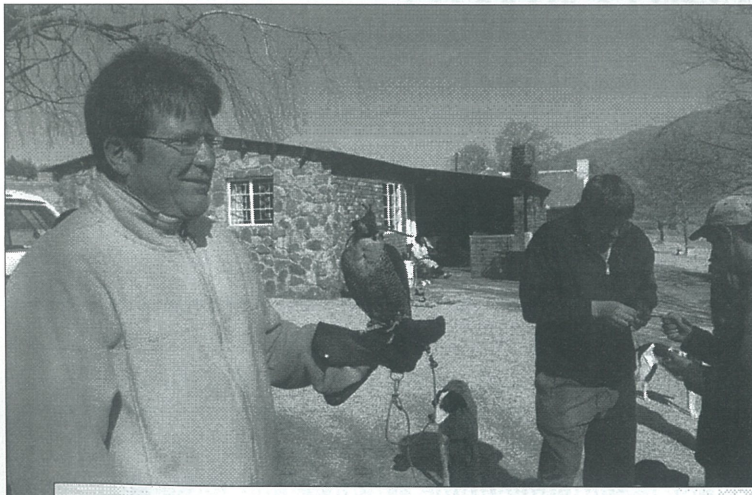
Natal falconers were given a wake up call when our conservation authorities saw fit to attempt to promulgate some new regulations concerning Ex Situ Wildlife. If the draft policy had been accepted in its original form it would have been potentially disastrous to KZN falconry. The crisis seems to have been temporarily avoided but watch this space.

On a more positive note the club continues to do its thing. The Durban-Hillcrest-Kloof contingent is particularly active. Ross and Charles are both flying good Lanners, Bruce and Elton are giving their tiercels a workout and a number of Af. Gosses and Black Spars are also in action.

I am working two passage Peregrines and my Black eagle and Tom will do the duck thing again.

Natal should have a good turnout at the SAFA meet this year and we look forward to seeing you all there. May your falcons mount as quickly and as high as our diesel and petrol prices!

Greg McBey



Dullstroom 2007

The North West Hawking Club

We are a relatively young club and this year we have been moving forward in leaps and bounds. We have full support from our local nature conservation department and our constitution, policies and procedures have been met with approval. The North West Hawking Club comprises of 6 members and at least 4 of them have been active in the seasons of 2007 and 2008. We hold regular meetings and get together as often as possible and are going to have a NWHC field meet in the first weekend of May 2008 and hope that this will prepare our falconers for the upcoming IAF/SAFA meet in July.

Our Chairman Rodger Nielson started the Season with a seven times intermewed Peregrine Falcon "Topaz" and managed to take three laughing doves and two red-eyed doves but unfortunately had to retire the old girl. He is hoping to fly a Black Sparrowhawk in the coming season and give the local gamebirds a hard time.

I have been flying a female African Hawk Eagle who was taken in August of 2007 just after the SAFA meet in Dullstroom. She weighs in at 1,7 to 1,8 kg and well built. "Cleopatra" has taken 5 natal francolin, 2 crested francolin, 2 guinea fowl, 2 tree squirrels, 1 grey Lories, 1 crowned plover and 1 sacred ibis. I hope to hunt Egyptian geese, Ibis, Herons and Gamebirds and she seems to show interest in all these species. She also works well over my English pointer and is learning that there are benefits of hunting over a dog. I hope to have a long fruitful relationship with this bird as she is well mannered and provides a splendid flight.

Ronny Gorrie has been flying a female African Goshawk and is having a lot of fun with "Jade". She has taken 1 crested francolin, 4 Indian mynas, 3 blacksmith plovers, and 2 crowned plovers. Jade was put down to molt out and as soon as the molt has finished Ronny will take her up again. He will continue to fly Jade into the coming season.

A New member to our club from the Limpopo Club is Dr. Lourens Coetzee and he has just taken up a captive bred Peregrine Falcon and as well as a male African Hawk Eagle. He is being kept busy with these birds and will have them in top form for the upcoming meet.

We have two other members that are not flying birds in the province and these are Marissa Gorrie who is the club secretary and takes care of most of the clubs administrative needs. Andre Cilliers joined our club late last year and is still a member but has moved to the Western Cape to work as an assistant at Eagle Encounters with Hank Chalmers and we are sure that he will learn a lot from this experience.

As a club we have located a total of 8 active nest sites and we monitor them regularly. These include 2 Whalbergs Eagle, 1 African Hawk Eagle, 1 Black Sparrowhawk, 1 Pale Chanting Goshawk, 1 African Goshawk and 2 Little Sparrowhawk nests and hope to increase our data base in the following year.

We as the North West Hawking Club are committed to the true art of falconry and are in the process of putting policies and regulations in place that will ensure that falconers are able to continue to practice falconry, as has been enjoyed for thousands

of years, and we wish to allow this fine art to continue into the future by educating and working together with our conservation authorities to allow them to understand the role falconry has to play in the conservation of raptors.

Dylan Freeman



Ron Hartley with his cast of Tiercel Peregrines in the field.

TALES OF A LOST HAWK #1

Slutterbitch gets a Ride.

Rudi Giesswein is one of the old Masters of Zimbabwean Falconry. He flew a number of stunning peregrines, of which probably the most famous was Slutterbitch. He often flew at Raynham Dam, just outside Harare, where he had a choice of duck or gamebirds.

One afternoon, he was out with John Condy and decided to look for a francolin set-up. The dog came on point and he put Slutterbitch up. She started taking pitch over the dog, and then peeled away in a long stoop towards the dam. They watched to see if she threw up and when she didn't, presumed that she had killed. They started walking towards the dam. On the far side of the Dam they saw a man walking, watched as he bent down and picked up Slutterbitch on her kill and start to carry her off. Rudi shouted, yelled, swore and broke into a run. The man holding Slutterbitch either ignored or couldn't hear him but ran back to his own car, a red VW Beetle, parked nearby, and then drove off.

What do you do now? They were desperate and feared the worst! John and Rudi held a council of war. They knew that Raynham Dam was often frequented by bird watchers, so they contacted a friend in the Bird Club.

"Yes", she said, "there is a club member who fits that description with a red Beetle. He is a teacher at Prince Edward School and lives in the Masters, Quarters."

Rudi and John drove to the school, switched on the telemetry and, sure enough, it beeped!

They ran the teacher to ground in his rooms with Slutterbitch perched on a chair. Red faced explanations and several brandies followed and Rudi returned home with his hawk.

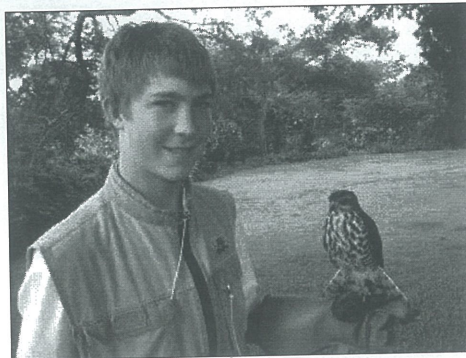
PENRYN FALCONRY CLUB REPORT: 2007

Steven Van Rensburg

The falconry season got off to a good start with 5 falconers actively flying their birds at different species of quarry.

The most notable flights were at quail. Some flights ranged from 5 meters to about 100 meters where the quarry was taken either in the air or on the ground as they put into cover.

Wentzel Burger (C-grade): Flew a rehab male African Goshawk (Spud) with great success making up a tally of 12 kills over a period of 2 months. His bird was renowned for taking quarry in the air after hard chases of approximately 80 meters. Due to sporting commitments, Wetzal decided to take a break from falconry and his bird was released back into the wild.



Wentzel Burger with Spud

Willem Burger (C-grade): Flew a beautiful captive bred female African Goshawk in 2006 and early 2007. She unfortunately succumbed to bacterial infection in May 2007. Willem decided to focus on his academic endeavors and has taken a break from falconry.



Willem Burger with Jezebal



Joshua Meaker with Avo

Joshua Meaker (C-grade): Is flying a rehab female African Goshawk (Avo). He has had some hunting success with her and is hoping for a better season in 2008. Joshua is a keen and enthusiastic falconer who only wants to give his best. (A most notable kill was a large rooster, which Joshua says, was taken in fine style!)

Duncan Roberson (C-grade): Is flying a 5 year old African Goshawk. She was passed onto him by Matthew Stevens, who by the way was also an active Penryn Falconer (one of the first). Duncan has had limited success with his bird and will be taking on Gideon Stemmet's Goshawk in 2008. His bird will be put into a breeding program. Duncan is also a very keen and enthusiastic falconer who spends many hours with his bird in the bush.



Duncan Roberson with Nakita

Ross Leslie (C-grade): Ross was also flying a captive bred female African Goshawk (Breeze). She was flown mainly at squirrel and guinea fowl which she sometimes took in fine style. Due to academic and rugby commitments, Ross has decided to take a break from falconry. Breeze was unfortunately killed by a Puff Adder in October this year. She was going to be placed into a breeding program.

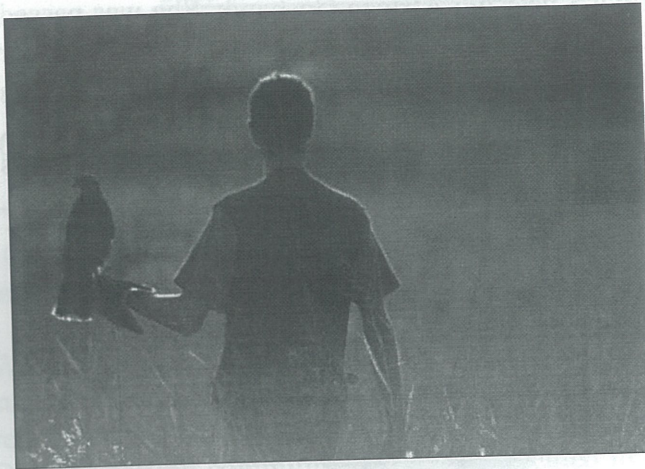


Ross and Breeze



Breeze on Mongoose

Gideon Stemmet: Gideon is a C grade falconer and also Chairmen of the Penryn Falconry Club. He has successfully flown a captive bred (2005) African Goshawk (Bullet) for most of 2006\2007 and has made over 200 kills to his/her name. She performed well on quail, grass birds and Guinea Fowl in general. Gideon is hoping to achieve his B grade status at the end of the year.

*Bullet**Zeppelin*

Mr. Steven Van Rensburg (A- grade): Flew his female Peregrine (Verruca) with moderate success this year. She came in as a rehab bird from Spier in June 2005 and was only flown again in 2006 (August). She was put down for the molt and after a 6 month period taken up again in April 2007. After many hours of hard work she now behaves like a peregrine. She will be flown again in 2008 and possibly released back into the wild at the end of the same year.



*Mr. V Rensburg and Verruca
(SAFA 2007)*

Presently: Mr. V Rensburg is presently flying another rehab Peregrine, also from Spier, (Yzma) which flew into a fence inflicting superficial wing damage. She has been in the air for approximately 3 weeks and seems to be doing fine. She will be flown at quarry for a seasons or two and then possibly released back into the wild

Captive Breeding: Due to unavoidable building activity around the peregrine breeding pen our breeding pair failed to breed. There is, however, lots of vocal activity taking place and it is hoped that they will breed next year (2008).

Our African Goshawks laid 3 eggs, which hatched towards the end of November 2007. 2 very large females and a musket were successfully raised and are now being used for falconry purposes.



Eyass African Goshawks 2007

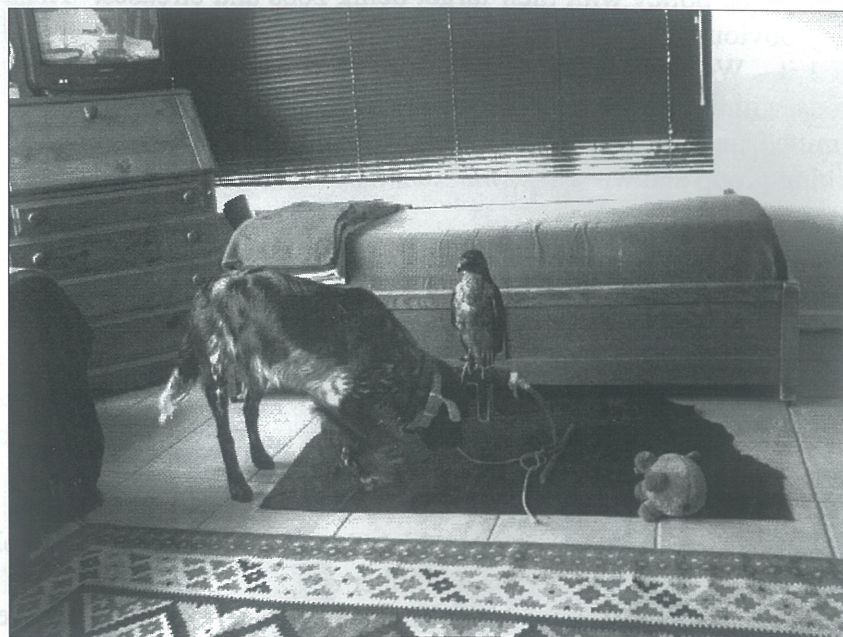
Research: The club has also spent some time during the “off season” collecting data on nesting sites in and around the greater Nelspruit area. Many eventful hours have been spent locating and recording possible Lanner and Peregrine nesting sites. We have also been given permission by various forestry companies to spend some time in their plantations recording, counting and identifying nesting sites of possible Black and Red Breasted spars, goshawks and other bird of prey species.

EXTRACT FROM THE CHASA NEWSLETTER #1/2008.

2. Falconry Joins CHASA

The CHASA Board has on 9 February 2008 unanimously approved application by the South African Falconry Association (SAFA) for membership of CHASA. SAFA is the national representative organization for falconry in South Africa and also a member of the International Association for Falconry (IAF). The IAF is a full member of the IUCN, which also has a close association with the CIC.

Making friends!



**SOUTH AFRICAN FALCONRY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL
REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
FALCONRY, 2007.**

The past year has seen further challenges to falconry in South Africa in terms of proposed legislation or policy formulation. By the same token, there has been a consolidation of the position of Falconry where we have counted our allies and formed new alliances.

Falconry continues to be practiced in all 9 provinces in South Africa, even though our representation in some of those Provinces is very small. There are now 9 member clubs which form SAFA. There are currently some 153 falconers who are club members in South Africa and, of these, some 75 have been active in the past year. Despite the small numbers, a high standard of falconry continues to be practiced. Our annual Field Meet was held at Dulstroom in the Mpumlanga Province in anticipation of the 2008 Meet. In the event, we found the quarry to be disappointing, so, despite the splendid scenery of that region, we have decided to hold the 2008 meet in the Free State Province, near to the city of Bloemfontein. This is a region which we know to have good quarry, coupled with huge skies that make it a long-wing paradise.

Two representatives of SAFA attended the Festival of Falconry in England, July 2007. Appropriately, one of these was from the Western Cape Province in the South and the other from the Limpopo Province in the North of our country. We thank the organizers for their generosity in providing place for our display and facilitation of our participation in this momentous event.

The greatest challenge that we have had to face this year has been the proposed "Policy for the Management of EX-Situ Animals" in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Province. This policy determines the approach of the provincial authorities to all wild animals, including exotic animals, which are not in their natural environment. There was obvious influence from animal welfare and animal rights elements in the drafting of the proposed policy with their target being zoos and circuses. The broad range of the policy obviously affected the future of falconry in that province and would have outlawed it. We have taken an approach of constructive engagement and have found friends within the provincial authority. Detailed comment on the Policy has been submitted and we are currently hopeful that falconry will be treated in a separate working group and we will work towards a separate policy that addresses our art.

I had the pleasure of addressing the Bird of Prey Working Group (BoPWG) of the Endangered Wildlife Trust at their annual conference this year. My talk dealt with the threat to conservation posed by Animal Rights groups and the role of falconers in conservation. This group has been encouraging the participation of falconers in conservation. We participated in a survey for Teita falcon nests organized by BoPWG and two new nests were found, this doubling the number of known nests in South Africa.

We have consolidated our relationship with other organizations involved in Gamebird Research (AGRED) as well as a number of hunting organizations. We have applied to be the representative organization for falconry within the newly formed Confederation of Hunting Associations of South Africa (CHASA) which represents

some 80,000 South African Hunters. We have also managed to see pro-falconry articles published in The Farmers Weekly magazine as well as in the professional hunters' on-line publication, African Indaba, which I recommend to all present at www.africanindaba.co.za

The main focus of our activities has been the preparation for the 2008 SAFA Field Meet where we will host the IAF AGM and which will be held from 14th to 20th July 2008. I must thank the president and members of the Advisory Committee of the IAF for their generous support and advice over the past year. I deeply regret that I am not with you in France but I send you my best wishes for a successful meeting. I look forward to the opportunity to welcome you all in South Africa next year.

Adrian Lombard

Secretary: South African Falconry Association.
Representative of SAFA to the IAF.

Dullstroom 2007

Photos Dave Maritz



Lanner at 2000ft.

*George McAllister
with "Cilla".*



PRESENTATION TO THE BIRD OF PREY WORKING GROUP
OF THE ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST - 2008
On behalf of the South African Falconry Association

May 2008.

Introduction:

Thank you for your invitation to SAFA to present at this gathering. I deeply regret that I, personally, am unable to attend what I suspect may be one of the best conferences organized by BoPWG to date. I am currently deeply involved in organization of the International Association for Falconry's AGM which will be held in South Africa in July.

Falconers are passionate about the well-being of raptors which are their fascination. We actively seek engagement in the conservation of these birds.

The purposes of this presentation are three-fold.

- 1) I wish to raise awareness and encourage interest in a falcon species of no direct interest to falconers, but which, I believe is deserving of more attention.
- 2) I was elected Executive Secretary of the International Association for Falconry at its last AGM. I wish to share with you concerns, of interest to those active in raptor conservation, which have been drawn to my attention through my involvement in this organization.
- 3) I wish to raise an issue which is of importance to falconers, conservationists and conservation authorities in South Africa. The issues involved are not immediately apparent but I wish to enlist your support in addressing them.

The Sooty Falcon.

The Sooty Falcon, *Falco concolor*, is a medium-sized falcon that is closely related to, and shares similar habits with the Eleonora's Falcon, *Falco eleonora*. These two species probably descended from a recent common ancestral species and have developed since the retreat of the last glacial ice sheet in Europe, perhaps no more than 15000 years ago. (Walter 1979) The Sooty falcon is structurally different from the Eleonora's falcon, being some 10% smaller in linear dimensions but, probably having a very similar weight. They are less heavily wing-loaded than the Eleonora's, but having a shorter tail, are less buoyant but probably faster in direct pursuit. This would suggest a degree of niche differentiation between these two recently separated species.

Identification of this species within its southern range may be more problematic than generally appreciated. This is due, in part, to its crepuscular habits, rapidly pursuing quarry at dusk. The adult bird is a distinctive slate grey with yellow cere and feet, but may be overlooked at a time of year when the country abounds with Amur and Red-footed falcons. The immature are similar to the immature Eurasian Hobby but has a greyer underwing, and lacks the reddish vent and leggings of the mature Hobby

The Sooty falcon breeds in some of the most inhospitable environments in the world. It is not a colonial nester but aggregations of these birds may be found on some of their island nesting sites. Nests are found in scattered localities from the Libyan Desert to adjacent Egypt, east to Sinai and rarely Israel. Further south they are found on islands in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, especially the Dahlac Archipelago. They have been found to nest in some numbers in Arabia, on islands in the gulf of Oman, on the Howar Islands south of Bahrain in the Arabian Gulf and in the Arabian Desert. (Cade 1982)

The Sooty falcons breed in autumn to take advantage of the trans-Saharan and trans-Arabian migrations of birds from Eurasia to Africa. They feed on a wide variety of these migrants, mainly small passerines but also on larger birds such as bee-eaters, waders and marine birds and have even been recorded taking sandgrouse. They have been recorded as hunting in pairs or, possibly, small groups.

These birds migrate south at the end of their breeding season to spend the off-breeding season mainly in the environs of Madagascar, and the east African coast extending as far south as Natal and the Eastern Cape.

The Sooty Falcon has been given a Global IUCN Conservation Status of Least Concern. This is based on an estimated population of 100,000 individuals. Comment from the IUCN is as follows:

"This species has a large range, with an estimated global extent of occurrence of 1,000,000-10,000,000 km². It has a large global population estimated to be around 100,000 individuals (Ferguson-Lees et al. 2001). Global population trends have not been quantified, but populations appear to be stable (Ferguson-Lees et al. 2001) so the species is not believed to approach the thresholds for the population decline criterion of the IUCN Red List (i.e., declining more than 30% in ten years or three generations). For these reasons, the species is evaluated as Least Concern."

Concern has been raised however, regarding the accuracy of these figures.

The Report of the Activity of the Small Bird of Prey and Owl Group at the Conservation Workshop of the Fauna of Arabia 2006 (Jennings and Sadler 2007) noted a serious discrepancy in the Arabian census data for this species. The Arabian breeding population is generally regarded as the as largest and possibly accounting for half of the World population. Never-the-less, the census data reveal a population of less than 500 breeding pairs. If breeding populations can be calculated at 3 per nest, the breeding population in Arabia cannot be more than 1500 individuals. These figures would suggest a serious overestimation of the global population of this species, or possibly emphasizes the mystery regarding the nesting localities of these birds.

If one visits the source documents for the population estimate, the plot thickens. Estimates of the population have been derived from observations in Madagascar where they appear to outnumber the Eleonora's falcon by a ratio of 10:1. There are an estimated 4,400 pairs of Eleonora's falcons and this would suggest a population of up to 40,000 pairs of Sooty falcons. (Cade 1982, del Hoyo 1994). The question is then "where do they breed?" It was believed that there were hither-to unknown breeding populations in Arabia, but the recent data tends to belie this.

The Sooty falcon was first recorded in southern Africa in 1961 but may have been overlooked prior to this because of its crepuscular habits.(Steyn 1982) It was noted as occurring mainly along the eastern littoral, where there are large trees and often near water. It has been recognized as a sporadic visitor to a wide area of southern Africa with reports extending from the Kruger Park to the Kalahari and even Namibia. (Mendelsohn in Harrison J.A. et al. 1997).

Jenkins (in Hockey et al 2005) gives a far more conservative estimate of the population of this species at less than 5000 breeding pairs, which can then be extrapolated to a total population of 15,000 individuals. He notes the paucity of historical records and suggests that observations represent a recent expansion of its winter range to include south-eastern Africa.

Comment:

Brief examination of the literature regarding this species raises more questions than it gives answers.

How can population estimates vary from 100,000 to 15,000 individuals? This calls into question its status of Least Concern.

Why does the larger portion of its population migrate to Madagascar? What niche does it fill? Alternatively, what is the attraction of this island to the species?

Is the southern distribution of this species changing as the record suggests, or was it previously overlooked?

If the southern distribution is changing, is there some change in the environment, either in southern Africa or in Madagascar that is encouraging this?

This is an engaging little falcon with a fascinating and enigmatic biology. It runs serious risk of being a true Cinderella species; too dispersed and challenging to be observed in its breeding quarters, too common to compete with other species of serious conservation concern in its wintering grounds of Madagascar and, finally, too rare and difficult to monitor in Southern Africa.

I would like to suggest that we should raise the level of concern with respect to this species. We should increase the awareness of the public, particularly of "birders" to the species and encourage reporting of sightings. We should look to filling gaps in the scientific knowledge regarding this species and possibly consider commissioning a count in its non-breeding range to establish the true population estimation of the species.

I would now move on to:

Considerations of the Conservation of the Saker Falcon.

While the Saker Falcon is of no direct concern Raptor conservation in southern Africa, it is a species whose conservation status is of interest to conservationists and falconers worldwide. This species was certainly one of the earliest used in falconry and has a history of domestication for falconry purposes extending back for at least 5000 years. There was, originally, no sensible reason to employ captive breeding techniques for this species. Birds were trapped in autumn with the southern migration, as "birds of passage", used through the winter for hunting and released in spring to join the northern migration to the breeding grounds. This gives a historical example of sustainable use extending over thousands of years.

Concern has been raised in recent years concerning the decreasing numbers of Sakers, on migration through the Arabian Peninsula, in their breeding grounds in Mongolia and in Eastern Europe. Facile explanation will lay the blame for this at the door of Middle Eastern falconers whose recent oil wealth has allowed them to practice their passion for hunting, and falconry in particular, to an extent never possible before. Indeed, to some degree this may well be a factor in the species' decline.

Previous experience should make us more wary of accepting facile explanation to the detriment of performing our function as conservationists. The decline of the European Peregrine population was initially blamed on falconers before competent research showed DDT to be the devastating culprit. Indeed it was the falconers who initially recognized the decline in breeding success in this species. Similarly, the farcical but damaging "Operation Falcon" was mounted against North American Falconers in the erroneous belief that they were devastating North American peregrine populations to supply a supposedly lucrative Arab market. This naturally failed to produce any evidence.

My connections with international falconers have provided fascinating insights into this area, all be it with significant language difficulties. I am in contact with the Mongolian delegate to the IAF, Dorjsurien Otgonsaikhan, and he provided the following insight into conservation issues affecting the Saker in Mongolia:

The Mongolian government has established a List of Rare Species and this lists only two species of falcon, the Gyrfalcon and the Amur falcon. The Saker falcon is not listed in the Red Data book of Mongolia but is listed under CITES Appendix 2. In light of this, the Mongolian Government has approved, by resolution, the National Program for the Conservation of the Saker. Collaboration is sought with overseas organizations and David Ellis, attached to the National Avian Research Center of Abu Dhabi, UAE, has been collaborating with Mongolian Ornithologists and establishing artificial nests in the Steppe region of Mongolia.

Cites regulations are implemented. Permits to trap and export 300 Saker falcons were awarded in 2006. Trapped birds had rings attached but, as these were removed in Arabia, the authorities have switched to micro-chipping. The controls applied have unfortunately had the effect of raising the value of Saker falcons and increased the activity of illegal trappers.

Mongolia has been experiencing a period of excessive dryness for the past 10 years. This has reduced the numbers of Marmots and Souseliks. This has had a substantial impact on the populations of raptors that rely on a diet of these rodents. Similarly the population of Sakers is directly related to that of Brandt's Voles. The use of rodenticides has had a significant impact, along with incidents of large scale poisonings of falcons.

Incorrect power-line installation is another source of Saker fatalities. In one reported incident, 20 Saker falcons died in 7 days along a 70Km. stretch of power-line

Clearly, from this report, the harvesting of Sakers in Mongolia is unsustainable. We continue to address this through our Arab membership. Controls within the Arabian nations, captive breeding and the release of wild taken, as well as captive bred, birds, back to the wild will benefit the situation. The issues of poisonings and lethal power-lines are all too familiar and we must hope that the Mongolian Authorities can address these to make the other measures meaningful.

Finally:

Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) Regulations and their Implications for Peregrine Conservation.

Inclusion of the Peregrine Falcon as a listed species with respect to the TOPS regulations has significant implications not only for Falconers but also, I believe, for Conservationists and Conservation Authorities.

At first glance the inclusion of this species may appear reasonable:

- It is a species whose population, in recent times was devastated by pesticides in the Northern hemisphere.
- It is an Iconic species, along with Rhinos and Dolphins.
- It is of interest to falconers.

More reasoned consideration will bring other issues to the fore:

- It is a species which has demonstrably increased its population in recent years, probably to numbers greater than ever before, as it has benefited from agriculture and "landscape modification" (Pepler et al.).
- It is a raptor species of interest to falconers in Southern Africa. The local subspecies is too small to interest the "Arab Market" or any other international market.
- The Burden placed on Conservation Authorities to implement the regulations, with respect to this species, is onerous and will distract their efforts from more

worthy tasks. The breeding and transporting of this species by falconers does not merit the bureaucracy involved in the administration of these regulations

- There are financial and bureaucratic implications for falconers which, at best, will restrain captive breeding and the costs will utilize the scant resources of a community which is not wealthy. At worst, it will discourage falconers from complying with the law and sharing their knowledge and ability in the handling and breeding of raptors.
- Worst of all, these regulations confer the same status to the Peregrine falcon as to the Teita falcon or to the Bateleur Eagle. In so doing, they devalue the special conservation needs of these and other embattled species.

The falconers admire and respect the Peregrine falcon. They value this species more highly than does any other interest group; but they cannot see a need for this species to have higher protection status than any other species that they work with, and cannot see the benefit that these regulations provide.

Similarly the falconers have a history of working with the Conservation authorities in an effort to comply with the law and to reduce the administrative burden that their activities may place on the Authorities. Many of the gains that they have worked out with provincial authorities are lost to these regulations.

In short, the application of these regulations to the Peregrine Falcon benefits neither the conservation of the peregrine, nor the Conservation Authorities, nor the Falconers. The Falconers will work towards an amendment of these regulations which will delist the Peregrine Falcon. This is in keeping with actions of Conservation Authorities internationally. I site the delisting of the Peregrine Falcon in the USA. I ask this body to lend us support in seeking a rational approach to these regulations.

References:

- Cade, T.J. (1982) *The Falcons of the World*, Cornell University Press.
- Del Hoyo, J. Elliott, A. and Sargatal, J. (1994) *Handbook of Birds of the World*, Vol 2. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.
- Jenkins, A.R. (2005) in Hockey P.A.R., Dean W.R.J. and Ryan P.G., *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa*(VII), John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.
- Jennings, M.C. and Sadler T.A. (2007) Report on the Activity of the Small Birds of Prey and Owl Group held at the Conservation Workshop of the Fauna of Arabia, Sharjah Desert Wildlife Park, 2006, *Falco* 29, p17 -19.
- Kemp, A. and M. (1998) *Sasol Birds of Prey of Africa and its Islands*, New Holland Publishers (UK) Ltd.
- Mendelsohn, J.M. (1997) in Harrison, J. A. et al. *The Atlas of Southern African Birds*. Vol.1. BirdLife South Africa, Johannesburg.
- Pepler, D. Lombard, A. Oettle, E. (2007) Populations of Peregrine Falcon in the South Western Cape, South Africa. Current Status. Proceedings of the European Conference on the Peregrine Falcon (in press)
- Steyn, P. (1982) *Birds of Prey of Southern Africa*. David Phillip, Publisher (Pty) Ltd. Cape Town.
- Temple, Helen. Program Officer, Red List Unit, IUCN, Personal communication.
- Walter, H. (1979) *Eleonora's falcon, adaptations to prey and habitat in a social raptor*. Univ. of Chicago Press.

Adrian Lombard

March 2008

NOTICE OF A PUBLICATION

Invitation was received to contribute to The Peregrine Conference held in Poland in September 2007. The conference was organized by the Society for the Protection of Wild Animals "Falcon" Poland.

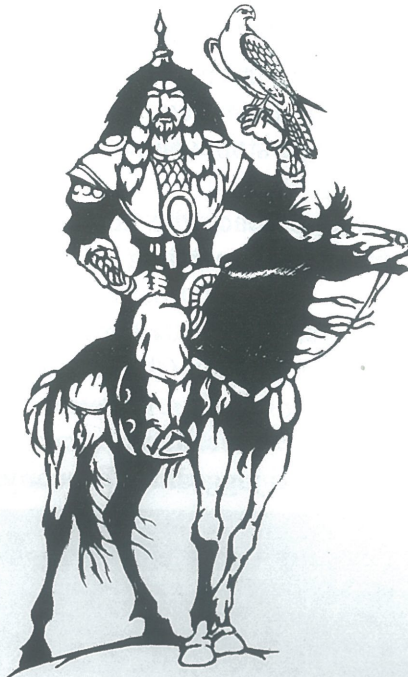
In response, a Poster Presentation was submitted entitled "'Populations of Peregrine Falcon in the South Western Cape, South Africa – Current Status.'" By Pepler D., Lombard A and Oettle E.

The paper examines the current population estimates of the Peregrine Falcon in the Western Cape and discusses the possibility that this population may well be greater than ever previously. So far, only the abstract has been published and publication of the proceedings of the conference is awaited.

The significance of this publication is that the current strength of the Peregrine Population is recognized and the inclusion of this species under the TOPS Regulations is challenged.

Further information can be obtained at: www.peregrinus.pl

"Mongolian Falconer"
From
Dorjsurien Otgonsaikhan



RECIPE FOR SCRAMBLED {SCRIBBLED} HARE

George McAllister

Ingredients:

1. One mature Nissan bakkie complete with box on top and spotlight, this has been modified to "load shed " as normally four persons required to operate:

One to drive, two to use spot / box and one to hold beers. Now only one operator is required. This innovation was developed to comply with overloading laws enforced by nice traffic personnel.

2. User friendly farm owner or Golf Club manager.

3. Tank of expensive petrol

4. Cooler box for medicinal purposes

Please note the next ingredient is vital and could result in failure if not included

5. A demon hare slayer -- an African Hawk Eagle called Cilla

Method

Place Cilla carefully in box and remember to remove all dangly bits from legs. Close box. Check that string attached to said box is operational. Check that bulb in spotlight is working, tank is full and bakkie has a spark in it. A good battery is essential.

Drive to favourite hare haunt, this should take about 2 beers.

Make a sweep of the area; watch out for pot holes as this disturbs the tippie and if on the greens look out for golfers who are making their way to the nineteenth hole.

Whilst reconnoitring, operate spotlight with right hand, your left hand is used to steer the vehicle. Once Harry the Hare is in your line of vision { preferably directly in front of you} that is IF you find said "bunny", then do a quick and dextrous juggling act and pull on the rope to open the box which should still be on top of the bakkie and watch the action. Cilla will do the rest.

Remember to slow down and stop when you hear the squeals, this could emanate from you or the scribbled one.

Alight from vehicle and approach the hunter carefully, reward her with a titbit and repeat the whole performance depending on how many you are catering for.

Lastly have a little light refreshment, return home with the spoils and cook in pot but do not add peas. Remember that old Chinese saying: person who cooks hare and pees in pot most unhygienic.

For more recipes go online to juggedhare@bunnyslayers.com



Cilla on Scribbled Hare. (Ron Hartley)

TALES OF A LOST HAWK #2

Lady Luck and a Passage Lanner

So, my Appie, who isn't an Appie any more, wants to fly a Passage Lanner and try to progress through the grading process. Seeing that he is currently flying a musket Black Spar that is a one-bird ecological disaster and threatening to decimate various gamebird species, I encourage him in his venture. I lend him my fail-proof Balchatrie, and first day out he catches a pair of haggard birds at the same time. I indicate that this often happens with my fingers crossed behind my back and send him off to "try and get a passage one this time".

He comes right with a stunning passage falcon that is flying free in 10 days and I wait to see him gain tracking experience. If you live on the Cape Peninsula with mountains, gale force winds and wild peregrines on every cliff face, your options for a training ground are somewhat limited. Zayin flies his lanner on the open ground near the city dump and she quickly develops a habit of flying across the dump to take stand in a distant group of gum trees so he decides to fly her late in the evening in the hope that she will be more focused and hang around him. She cuts a line anyway and fails to return with darkness falling. So it's "track to the gums and collect her again" time. A new complication is apparent when he reaches the gates to the dump which are closed and has to enter protracted negotiations with the gate guards which includes a crash course on falconry. He may do better claiming insanity next time. Finally, with only minutes of light left, he is allowed to drive through the gate but must wait for one of the guards to accompany him. Maybe they think he is going to steal something? He's waiting for the guard to join him and suddenly all the guards are calling him back to the gate. Completely desperate now, he returns to the gate. "We have your hawk Sir!" they tell him, pointing to an upturned milk crate. When this is lifted, his furious Lanner emerges clutching a Cattle Egret and hissing with rage.

His plan was right. The bird got tired of waiting at about the same time that he did, and flew back to find him. When he drove through the gate he flushed a group of Cattle Egrets when the hawk was directly overhead. She stooped and took one virtually into the door of the guard house, and the rest is history, as they say.

ACCIPITER TRAINING USING THE MC DERMOTT WAY

WITH THE HACK

Gregg Mousley

Having tried to fly my Lanner at guinea fowl, I spoke to Francois about a bird that would be able to hunt guinea fowl. This choice comes from the fact that we have so many guineas and francolin in our area. I had always heard about black spar's being the hardest birds to train but if you could get it right, one of the most versatile and rewarding. After hearing this from some experienced falconers I was a little nervous to take on the task and when talking to some, got comments, which were not the most encouraging at all. Here are my experiences:

You will need the following before your bird arrives.

- A wire welded mesh cage that can fit into the front of your bakkie
- A shallow box that can fit into the wire cage (a cat litter box type thing, I used a freezer wire tray)
- All the usual falconry equipment including a good bow perch

- Lots of freshly frozen food
- A large sheet to place under your cage
- An experienced short winger who does not mind lots of stupid questions from you.
- Most importantly tons of patience and an understanding wife (or no wife at all.)

had been watching a nest for some 3 years and I called Francois in to help me get a chick. The chick was about 14 days old as you may see in the pic.



He was placed on the kitchen floor where my two house staff were continuously walking past and doing the house work around him. The radio was on Lesedi Fm for the day to get him used to noise. The important thing is to expose your young bird to as much as possible. Let anyone touch him under your supervision but never on the head. I find they prefer to be touched on the back rather than on the chest. In the beginning you must let him stay in his cage. He will lie down and sleep most of the day. What you need to do as well is when you place his food into the cage make sure he is looking the other way, if he associates you with the food you have lost. This is very important so make sure you do this. As soon as you have a cage for him, place a glove inside the cage. This will get him used to the glove and he associates it with safety and comfort. He needs to get into a kind of routine. When he wakes up I take him and place him in a sunny spot for a while until it gets too warm, they love the early morning sun. Then I move him onto the stoep where half the cage has sun and the other half has shade.

You will be amazed at how fast he will grow. He will shed lots of flakes but this is fine as it is just off the growing feathers. Just shake his bedding off once a day or so.

You need to spend as much time with him as you can. In the evening take him into your TV room with you and let him sit on your lap, they like the heat off your tummy. Make sure you have a towel handy to catch the mites. You will soon see when he is about to mute.

Don't carry him around bodily, rather pick up the wire tray or take the glove. Once he is old enough let him sit on the glove it strengthens his legs and helps with balance.

You will have to make the call when you think he is ready. Just remember that he must never be hurt or manhandled by anyone.

Let him run around when you have friends around for a braai and let the kids touch him but as always under your supervision. Be careful of someone standing on him.

As he gets older place him on the bow perch (without a leash) and he will usually stay on it the whole time. If you have dogs and cats that are not used to falcons I don't recommend you try a spar. One day you will be off guard and lose your young bird.

You will notice that he starts to jump and flap his wings a lot when on the perch. This means he is nearing the branching stage.

Don't keep him in the cage too long, let him stretch his wings. Put him on top of the cage while you are around. You will see that one day he will start jumping up against the side of the cage when you close him inside. Now it is time to let him loose in your kitchen. Frightening, but it won't last too long. Prepare your wife for this, as it is not a pretty site. You will find that one day you put him onto the cage and he will start to jump up onto things and then take a short flight. You cannot leave him on his own so take your leave and spend the time with him.

Next he will sit in the tree and not be the least interested in you or your lure. Just leave him in the tree for the night. You can throw some dirty clothes at the base of the tree or have a pee in the evening to make the area smell of human and deter the genets from the tree. This is a nerve-wracking time but you must do it.

When you swing the lure to him shout or whistle so he can associate the sound of the lure with the food. Don't feed him off the glove. He will stay around the house and will usually have his favorite tree so if you cannot get him down just check where he has roosted for the night and give him a try in the morning. If he is still not keen then try that evening again. He will come down. Don't fiddle with him too much now and if he does not like to be tethered then don't. If he wont were weighed then don't. Basically just chill with him now. Never rob him of food or let him see you take away the left-overs, let him finish first.



He will look a tad scraggly for some time but once the down is off he will start to get the most beautiful brown feathers. Pretty soon he will be flying very well. He might resist getting onto the glove but don't worry about this.

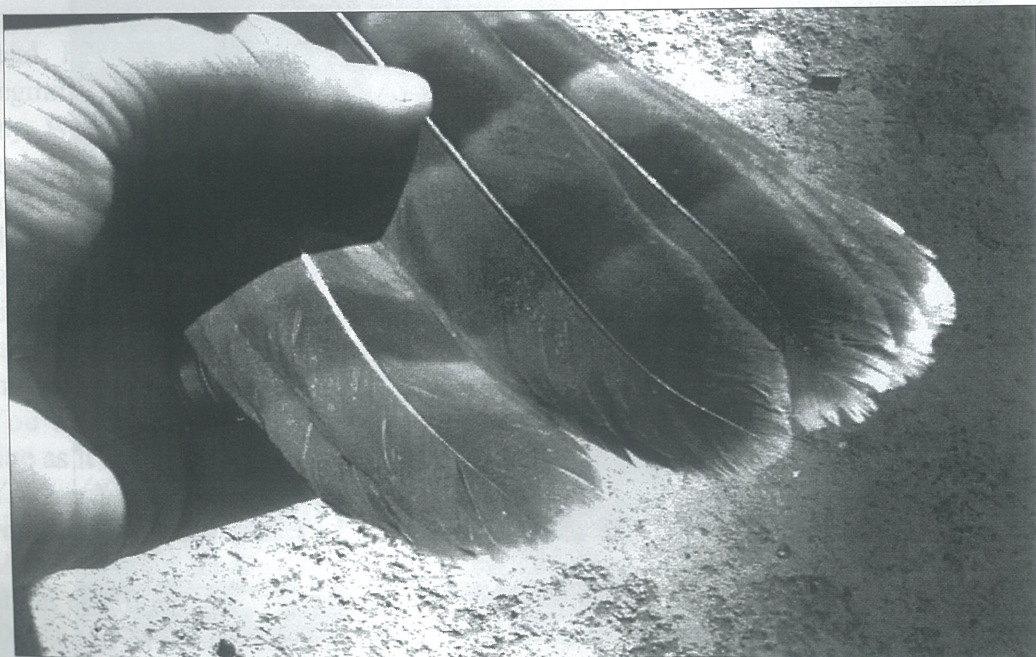
It is also time to start him with the lure. When he is sitting close to you garnish the lure well so that the red meat can be seen and throw it down in front of him, blowing your whistle as you do this. It might take a few goes but he will hop down and eat the food. Don't bother him but sit down next to him and let him eat in peace. Let him eat a full crop so that he is satisfied. If he doesn't finish the food leave it there until he moves off. Keep the bow perch nearby so he can jump onto it if he likes. You will find that once he has eaten he will be happy to sit on the perch for the rest of the day. Try not to disturb him then. He will quickly learn to associate the whistle to feeding time. Call him from out of sight as well so he comes on sound as well as sight. Be sure to make his experiences with you and other people pleasant. You can help him in the beginning by plucking a little and exposing the breast for him. Just watch his reaction and do it slowly. He needs to realize that you are going to help him not rob him. You can touch his feet a little while he is eating.

Soon he will call to you when he is hungry like at 5 am in the morning you will hear him calling from the roof.

At this stage he will start trying to catch his own food. It is good practice to have racing pigeons if you are considering falconry. The first attempt could possibly be at one of them while they are walking around on the lawn. If he injures one badly then you must help him dispose of it and then let him eat it until he has had his fill. Never take it away from him or you will ruin everything that you have been working on. He may ruffle up tail feathers during this attempt but hopefully you have no breakages.

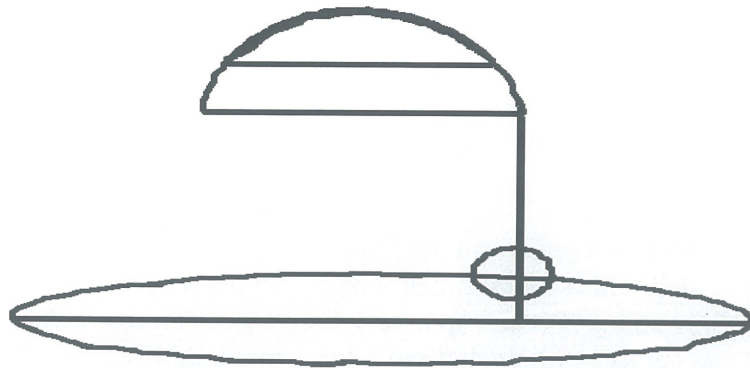
It is a joy to see a tail in a condition as above and this is the way I would like to keep it.

Now you need to be able to pick him up off the ground and I found that he either runs off or flies off. Don't worry about this for a while but once he is coming to the lure from some distance and quickly then it is time. By this time he should be happy with

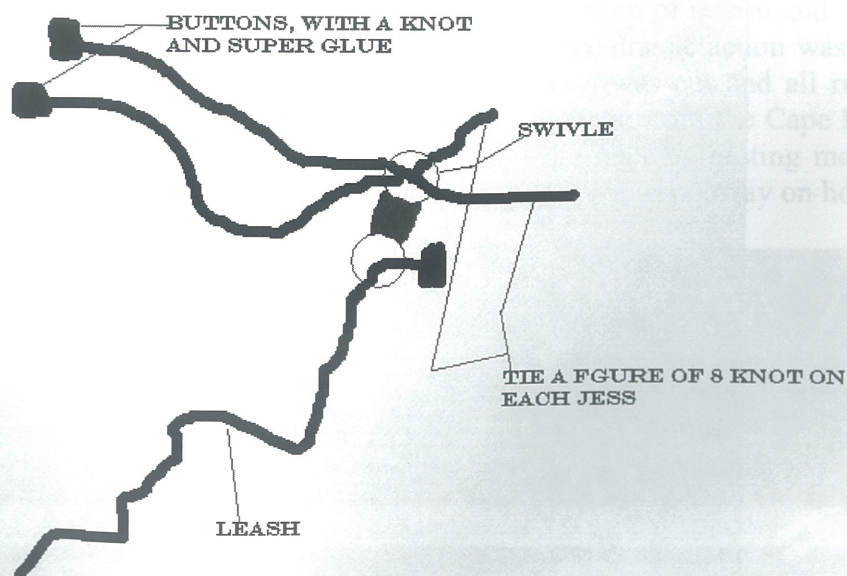


you sitting next to him while he is feeding on the lure. Let him take a few mouth-fulls off the lure. If he doesn't mind this then pick up the lure from underneath him. If he jumps off just hold it there and he should try to grab another bite. Let him. Now he will try to foot the food, move your glove so that he battles to tear a piece off. He should jump on and feed. If he does this let him have full crop. Walk around a little with him as well. You want him to see that the glove is a safe place to eat. Don't feed him off the glove without the lure. Remember the glove is a hunting and feeding post not the source of the food; the kitchen but not the cook.

Now you can leave him for some time to be free and to hone his hunting skills for you. Get a good bow perch ready, as you don't want to break feathers once you tether him down. A simple but good one is in the picture below



Before you tether him onto the perch be sure to tape his tail up with masking tape. As he is going to be very cross about being tied down. You will do well to use the system below to start off with as a spar can undo the best of knots and then be free again. A word of warning here- Be sure to tie each Jesse with its own figure of eight knot. If you tie them together then the knot is too big and damages the tail when he bates. The same goes for a small swivel, don't use those big barrel ones, they damage the feathers.



Once you see that your hawk is making his own kills it is time to tether him to the perch or he will stop coming to the lure. I now follow the same route as I did with a Lanner. I tried to get him to fly to the fist but he preferred the lure so I continued with this.

Now is the most trying time of all with a black spar. If you get here you will understand what I mean.

Weight control is crucial and hard as they can scream and drive you nuts. However if they are not on the correct weight you can forget about even getting a chase out of him. Put up with a little screaming, it passes.

When you establish his hunting weight, put on your telemetry now as otherwise you won't find him on his kill. I used a tail mount for this. He seems to scream less after he has had a good flight to something.

He does scream though and it can be really irritating to the whole family. If you don't have patience don't try this bird, you will end up hating it.

Now you need to find him easy quarry so he can make kills. This is also easier said than done. If you can find a small patch of water with duck on it then this can be a good place to start.

Sadly I lost Shredder in a hailstorm and had to leave him out for the night. I was not worried, as I had done this several times. The following morning I could get no signal. After 2 days of searching I picked up a very faint signal. I pinpointed it to a cliff face, which I could not get to. With the help of a local rock climber I found his remains. He had been killed and eaten.



All that I found was his legs. It was a very sad end to my experience with a black sparrow hawk. I learnt a lot out of this experience and especially about the choice of which hawk to fly. I am convinced that a sparrow hawk is far more difficult to train than a long wing. It demands a lot more patience and requires more time available for flying. He sadly never made a wild kill. The closest to that was an exiting chase after a guinea fowl that was pointed beautifully by Jack and Tess my GSPs. The black spar is a magnificent animal and is a privilege to live with. Maybe some day I will train another.



PENRYN GOSHAWKS DO IT AGAIN

Steven van Rensburg

Our Goshawks did not breed during 2006 due to an infestation of rats in and around the pen. So in anticipation of a successful breeding season, drastic action was taken with regards to the protection of the nest and pen. Grass was cut and all rubbish within a radius of 20m around the pen was removed. Foliage from the Cape Honey Suckle was picked, thrown into the pen and used by the male as nesting material. Three eggs were laid during the October holidays in 2007 (We were away on holiday, so exact dates were not recorded)

During the incubation period new foliage was added to the nest approximately every three days. This was done when the male brought in food for the female. He would sit on the opposite side of the nest and call to her to collect food. While she was eating he would bring in new nesting material or incubate the eggs for short spells at a time. When the female returned to the nest she would line the nest cup with fresh leaves and turn the eggs before continuing with incubation.



On three occasions, I entered the pen to observe the contents of the nest. The female was extremely aggressive and would not move off the eggs (I had to physically remove her in order to get to her eggs) Once the eggs were removed three ping-pong balls were used as placebo. The female would incubate these while I checked the eggs to ascertain fertility.



When replacing the eggs I was once again met with the same aggression. Her aggression towards me became more fettered when the eggs hatched. It was noted that the female did most of the incubation whilst the chicks were growing up. The male was observed taking food to the nest, where he was met with aggression. He would drop it off and beat a hasty retreat; this went on for about 3 weeks.

During weeks 4 and 5 both parents were actively feeding the chicks and by week 6 the youngsters were able to eat on their own. By weeks 7 and 8 they were able to fly down from the nest, collect their own food and confidently feed themselves.

We are absolutely delighted to report that all three young goshawks are being used for falconry and will possibly be used for captive breeding purposes at a later stage in their lives.

Our goshawks have, over a five year period, have hatched and successfully raised 9 youngsters (all being used for falconry) and it is hoped that we can continue with this success in the future!



NOVEL APPROACHES TO SOME FALCON DISEASES

Dirk Verwoerd – Falconer & Veterinarian

Which are the most feared falcon disease conditions? Depending on what you fly and where you live, the list might differ somewhat, but will probably contain the following;

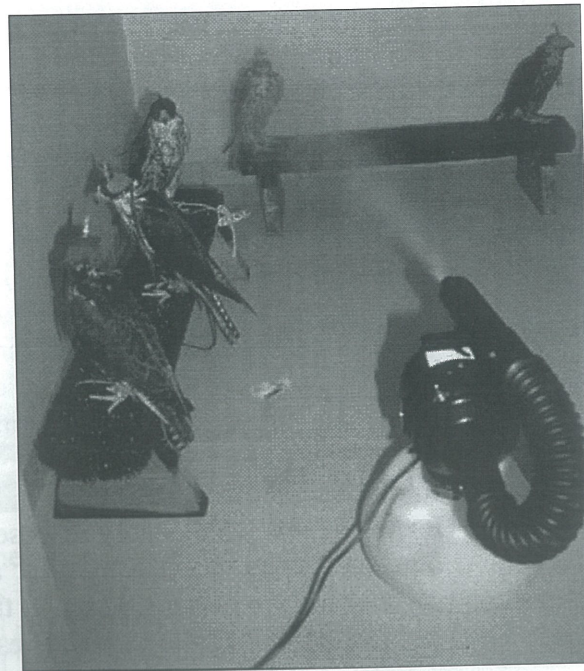
- **Aspergillosis**
- **Bumblefoot**
- **Falcon Herpes Virus**
- **Trichomonas = “Frounce”**
- **Coccidiosis**

Most captive bred falcons carry **Coccidia** parasites in their gastro intestinal tracts, and any stressful situation such as training or severe weather can stimulate a “flare-up”, with concomitant lethargy, foamy to bloody diarrhea and in the case of merlins, acute death. Luckily the condition can be effectively contained using treatments developed for pigeons (Diclazuril or Toltrazuril) as soon as the first signs appear. A similar approach is effective against **Frounce**, (Dimetridazole or carnidazole), a mouth & crop parasite infestation that cause flicking away of food, abnormal crop turnover, and often indicated by deteriorating flight performance. The risk of transmission of the Trichomonas parasite from doves & pigeons to our falcons can be lowered significantly by simply removing the head & crop from fresh carcasses before they are fed.

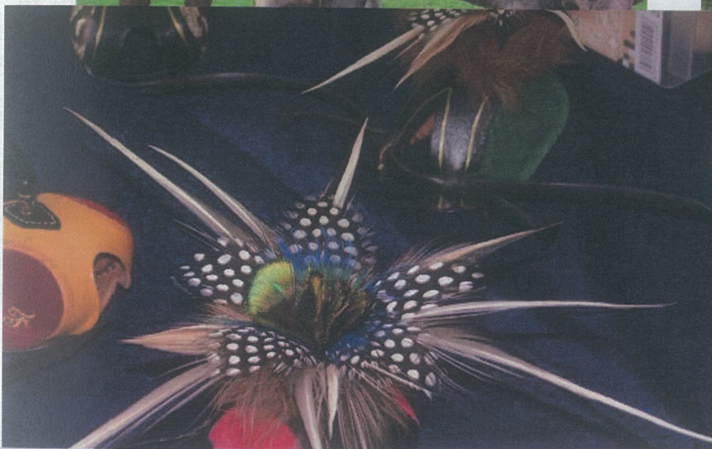
Pigeons, especially ex racers, also known colloquially as “Church Square Specials”, also often carry **Pigeon/Falcon Herpes Virus**. This deadly disease has no effective treatment or vaccine for prevention, and Gyrs or Gyr hybrids are exceptionally sensitive to it. This type of virus typically hide in nervous tissue in the carrier host, so if one has to feed pigeons to Gyrs etc, it should be limited to the chest and wings, with the rest discarded.

Until quite recently a diagnosis of **Aspergillosis**, a fungal infection of the avian respiratory system was another death sentence for falcons. It is also a very common condition in parrots and some exotic ducks. Medical treatment with itraconazole tablets on its own was just not good enough. The intricate design of airsacs that communicate with the lungs of birds through tiny tubes, where there are very poor blood circulation in many of these thin walled structures, indicated an inhalation approach using very small droplets. Although tried many times with a variety of chemical compounds, this became feasible during the late 1990’s, with the introduction of F10 to the veterinary world. This unique combination of 6 active ingredients, **effective at very low concentrations against viruses, bacteria, yeasts and fungi, with no tissue irritation or corrosive effects on instruments**, allowed us the best of both worlds that was simply not possible before. We could now effectively kill resistant microorganisms on mucosal and airsac surfaces with no irritating side effects, in combination with appropriate antibiotics or antifungal agents that could work their magic via the blood circulation in well perfused organs. This approach suddenly gave falcons and other birds diagnosed early with Aspergillosis, a realistic opportunity to recover fully. In advanced cases unfortunately, the toxic organ damage is just too much while the fungal growths physically block and destroy the lungs and airsacs. Aspergillosis typically present as a rapid deterioration of flying ability, lethargy, difficult breathing, sometimes a change in voice if there is fungal growth in the larynx, often accompanied by green mutes. These symptoms could have a large variety of causes, so the diagnosis is often made by visual inspection of the airsacs

using laparoscopy or blood tests. Smart money is always in Prevention rather than Cure, so in 1999 the Falcon hospitals and some of the breeding projects in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia started preventative fogging programmes using F10 with falcons and other birds showing ANY type of respiratory signs, or going through a predictable stress period such as newly arrived falcons in breeding projects, or young falcons starting their training. This approach has lowered losses due to Aspergillosis and other respiratory conditions dramatically and has been adopted by many breeding projects, zoos and Avian & Exotic vets in South Africa, UK, Europe, USA and Australia.



F10 in ointment form has also proved itself as an essential part of any treatment programme against **bumblefoot**. Many foot infections of birds of prey remain refractory to traditional antimicrobial therapy simply because the spectrum of efficacy of these drugs is limited and they cannot kill yeasts & fungi. New research has clearly demonstrated the importance of yeasts & fungi in perpetuating foot infections in falcons and other raptors. All experienced avian vets have a structured approach to bumblefoot where different levels of intervention are indicated by the "grading" of the lesions into levels of severity. In all cases F10 wound ointment should be used as a topical treatment in conjunction with the appropriate antibiotics (injections / tablets) and where necessary surgery, protective "shoes" etc. Once again a treatment plan from both inside and outside remains the best combination, where the efficacy plus safety of F10 result in remarkable treatment successes. In addition, F10 Germicidal Wound Spray with Insecticide and F10 Germicidal Barrier Ointment with Insecticide are the other, very user friendly products in this family, with a wide range of applications to open wounds in hunting falcons, rehabilitation raptor cases as well as every season's cuts & wounds our canine hunting partners sustain as part of falconry. Having used F10 in various forms in both veterinary hospital settings, animal production environments as well as in field, first aid type situations for the last 13 years, there is no doubt in my mind that this versatile agent have changed the way we approach wounds, infectious diseases and related issues, forever.

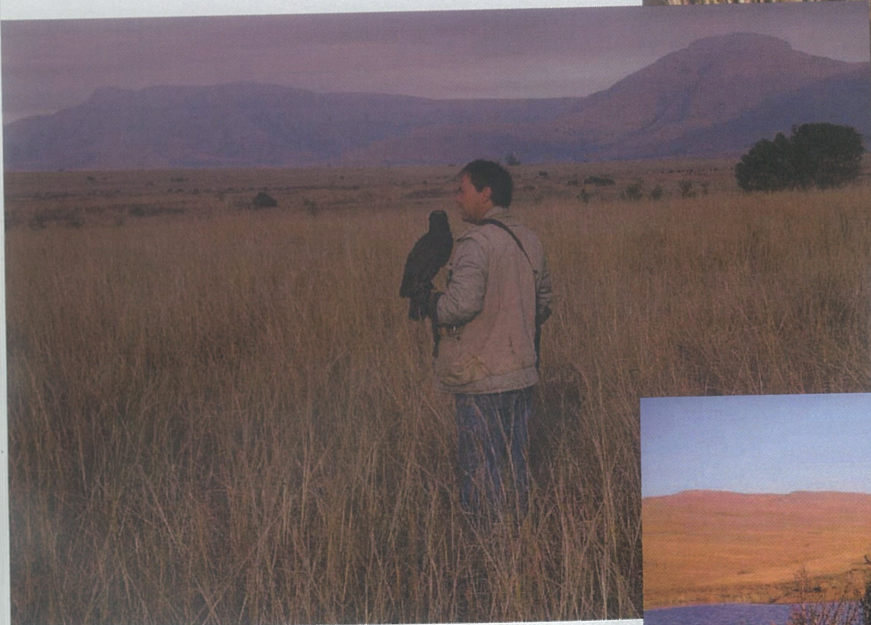


**The Falconry Festival –
2007**

South Africa represented by
Suzette Du Toit, Dawid and
Barend Botes.



African Falconry:
African Hawk Eagle on Natal Francolin, Lanner on Laughing Dove, Black Spar in the field, and immature Black Spar on Redwing Fancolin.



safety of leaving
Wound Sparrow
we are interested
applications for
one of our
every search system
Having used P
production environments
you, there is no doubt in my
approach wounds, infectious



RON HARTLEY – A Photographic tribute.

Above: Ron with the Falcon College Falconry Club. Many of Southern Africa's falconers developed or grew their passion for the Art under Ron's mentorship.

Right: 15 year old Jesse on his first Greywing at Tweespruit in 2004.

Right lower: Teita Falcon. Ron was the foremost Researcher in this species.

Below: "Cilla", 23 years in Ron's hands she continues to hunt today. Ron loved his "Bunny Hunts" and many of us who knew him, cherish the memory of these outings with him.





FOOT DESIGN AND WHAT IT TELLS YOU ABOUT A HAWK

Roger Neilson

Not so long ago I was browsing through a collection of Falconry Magazines belonging to a friend. I came across an article on Ornate Hawk-Eagles. I am fascinated by any kind of Hawk-Eagle, I "devoured" it hoping that it would add to my store of Hawk-Eagle lore. I can only assume that the Interviewer of the two Ornate Hawk-Eagles featured in the article was not a Falconer as not once in three pages of text was the weight of the birds discussed, the size of foot recorded, the shape of wing or wing loading mentioned! The accompanying photo of one of these magnificent birds also seemed to miss out all of these [to me] vital statistics. All I did manage to glean from this article was the female was flown at Jack Rabbits and the Musket was flown at Starlings out of the window of a motor vehicle. This latter piece of information makes me think that the Male O.H.E. is a lot smaller than our 1200 gram Musket African Hawk-Eagle, has short rounded wings capable of rapid acceleration, a long shifty Goshawk like tail, and a Bird Catchers foot, but it would be nice to know for sure if my assumptions are correct.

I started drawing Hawks feet in 1971; I was flying a female African Hawk-Eagle at Scrub Hare [weight of adult Scrub Hare 3.5lbs to nearly 5lbs] mostly at night by the lights of a vehicle and by day at Swanson's and Natal Spur-fowl. I was also rehabilitating a Tawny Eagle [weight of Tawny Eagle 6lbs +] that had been poisoned. An American friend named Roger Claude, with whom I had a lively correspondence at the time, wanted to know all there was to know about both birds, so I drew measured diagrams of their feet and posted these to him along with the other information he requested. The 1.5 kilo A.H.E. had a far more impressive foot than the Tawny Eagle twice its size. Roger decided on the strength of this information that a Tawny was not the answer to his problem of having the daylight kicked out of his hawks by Antelope Jacks [a species of Hare totally unrelated to an Antelope] and acquired a Bonelli's Eagle instead. The Bonelli's Eagle [closely related to our African Hawk-Eagle] weighed in at 1.4kilos and could Stop an Antelope Jack dead in its tracks. I cannot remember the weights of the Antelope Jacks taken by Roger, but I flushed several in the Desert outside of Tucson in 1972/73 whilst hawking a Black Sparrow-hawk at Gambles Quail and at a guess I would say they would tip the scales at between 4 and 5 kilos [12 to 14 lbs if you have a problem thinking metrically!]

Virtually every book I have ever read on the subject of Falconry stresses the fact that one can learn a lot by looking at a hawk's feet. Some go as far as providing photographic plates that show off the feet well, but none up till now will give you a measured diagram of a hawk's foot.

I say "up till now," because I am working on a book which I have called "Records of an Artist and a Falconer" that will amongst other things set that particular record straight. I would like to give the Readers of "Mews Views" a small sample of what I have set out to do in the chapter dealing with hawks' feet, and hopefully encourage some of you out there to make detailed diagrams of your hawks' feet and, at the very least, include these in your Hawking Diaries. Eastern Falconers have for a very long time given of attention to the size and shape of their hawks' feet, counting the number of scales of the petty-single toe and prizing those individuals that possess an extra scale or two. My own rather recent observations leave me to believe that there is a definite correlation between the size of the foot and the size of the heart, and that this

may very well apply to individuals within the same species. An example case is the difference in foot size between the African Peregrine and the Lanner. How many times have I seen a Lanner strike a cock Spur-fowl and fail to bind to its Quarry? Is it the Lanner's smaller foot or the Lanner's smaller heart that is the problem? Some Lanners - mostly well-armed Lannerettes - can, and do, bind to cock Spur-fowl but are usually too lightweight to hold them. Both Lanner and Peregrine are in the same weight class and yet the African Peregrine with its huge spread of hand is a slayer of Duck, Spur-fowl and if given the opportunity even Scottish Red Grouse.

Plates 1 and 2, the black Eagle foot and the Martial Eagle foot, depict the foot of a Mammal catcher and rather surprisingly the more delicate foot of a Bird Catcher. I knew the Martial was partial to Guinea Fowl and Francolin, but not to the extent that the design of its foot would suggest. Plate 2 depicts the foot of a 75% bird catcher! Oh, don't be fooled by the rather light weight of the Male Martial Eagle, females can weigh 16lbs and more. I have yet to collect the foot diagram of the female Martial Eagle so any one out there with access to a female Martial Eagle please let me know. Other birds that really impress me with the size of their feet are...

1) The African Peregrine, and 2) the 320 gram midget the African Goshawk whose superb armament I have witnessed kill Francolin and Spur-fowl of double its own weight in a matter of a few seconds. 3) The Ovambo Sparrow hawk with its incredibly long toes and potent pouncer and back talon cannot fail to impress. It alone amongst the Accipiters has only one grasping nodule on the underside of its petty-single toe [further differences include brown falconine eyes and red feet] 4) The equally impressive "hand" of the 90% bird catching Ayres Hawk-Eagle, and lastly, the massive hand of the female Black Sparrow hawk is a Falconers dream hawk incarnate!

How does one go about executing a measured foot diagram? I use a sharp No H pencil, a pencil eraser, a drawing bloc of cartridge paper and a pair of dividers. One then hoods the hawk and stands the hawk on the cartridge paper or more easily an assistant "casts" the hooded hawk and presses one of its feet onto the cartridge paper. In both cases one waits for the hawk to settle down before pinpointing on the surface of the paper the points of contact of all four talons. Next the points where the talons merge with each toe, and the fleshy "grasping nodules" on the underside of each toe, and finally the outline of each toe. This outline is by far the most difficult piece of visual information to transcribe accurately and may have to be adjusted with the pencil-eraser and toe thicknesses measured with dividers frequently before you have it right. Once the basic outline is captured "on plan" one can turn one's attention to counting the number of large scales on the toes and how these are arranged, shape, thickness and curvature of talons are also noted and transferred to paper. Some subjects don't seem to mind having you work around their feet with a pencil, others fidget like crazy and you find yourself constantly having to abandon and re-start drawings. I recently "chickened-out" of taking the vital statistics of a 17lb female Crowned Hawk-Eagle when its owner informed me that it had recently broken free of its "moorings" and attacked one of his Staff breaking both of the poor fellow's arms among numerous other nasty things, I am still without a Crowned Hawk-Eagle foot in the collection, so if anyone knows of a good tempered one I would dearly like to record its vital statistics.

Apart from a female Martial Eagle, a Crowned Hawk-Eagle, Teita Falcon and Dark Chanting Goshawk, I have pretty much wrapped up the African hawks, What I still need to record are all of the North American and a lot of the European and Asian hawks feet. I am hoping that this article will generate some interest overseas and that I can exchange signed dated diagrams with overseas Falconers. Any one interested can contact me at the following address,

Roger Neilson
21 Joan Road
Oak Tree
Krugersdorp North 1741
South Africa

I salute you and wish you good hawking!



North-West Hawk Eagle – Dylan Freeman

THE POISONING OF RAPTORS AND OTHER CONSPIRACIES.

Arnold Slabbert

I once read an article entitled "Sex and cleaning firearms" which was just about cleaning firearms. The author added the sex bit because he felt that the average guy was more interested in sex than cleaning firearms. Well most humans tend to ignore the consequences of our wasteful lifestyles and we rather think about the nice things like flying hawks etc...and there is a conspiracy!

My interest in the poisoning of raptors is because I get to see many of them die and my once raptor rich area has dwindled to peregrines and black spars. No more owls and garden goshawks, even the rock kestrels, black-shouldered kites and booted eagles have also joined them in the afterlife. The really worrying thing is that no one seems to notice or actually care! I haven't been approached by local bird clubs and societies such as the Wildlife Society expressing their outrage at the mass carnage that poison is causing in predator populations. Neither is anyone of them actually doing something about it!

About 2 years ago I went out one afternoon to my favorite falconry grounds. I stopped my truck next to a vehicle load of "twitchers" [that's what bird-watchers like to call themselves; I think it's actually meant to be "titchers"]. I greeted them with all due regard for their noble sport, kept my dogs at heel, my peregrine hooded and left the relieved "easy covey" in peace. I set the dogs off over the ridge, out of sight and was just settling down when my trusty phone rang and it kept ringing. Nature Conservation, the local police, in fact it was still ringing two days later. Those dear old birdwatchers had phoned everybody to report this great evil that they had seen. The sad truth of the matter for them was that I was fully permitted and was the only person legally on that property. They were actually trespassing! Now if only they could put all that effort into fighting the big corporations that are poisoning our world or at least into actively supporting poison-free initiative.

Anyway before anyone thinks that I seriously dislike people [and that I'm politically incorrect] let me get back to the poison story. The main culprit is the rodenticides used in an attempt to control the planets [because it's a worldwide phenomenon] ever increasing {pest} rodent populations.

Rats develop resistance to these poisons in a matter of months and carry lethal-to-raptor doses of these poisons stored in their body tissue and on them. The reason I say "on them" is because the only effective means of poisoning these intelligent creatures is to use poison grease which is smeared on their walkways. The grease adheres to the rodent's fur and when it grooms itself it is theoretically poisoned. Woe betide the predator that grabs that rat! About 20 seemingly healthy sub-adult [approx.180 grams] roof rats will kill an adult spotted eagle owl. That's about two weeks of urban hunting in Port Elizabeth. If the rat is ill, often one large rat will do the trick, the owl will die within 12 hours. Two years ago just in the month of November I saw 23 poisoned raptors from the metro area including booted eagles, wood owls, rock kestrels and spotted eagle owls; only two survived.

Active spotted eagle owl nest sites in the urban areas dropped from 23 in 2001, to 4 in 2006 with only 3 being destroyed as a result of development. In the rest of the

deserted nest sites the birds just “disappeared “.The last 4 nest sites are now also deserted.

This is happening country-wide and from the reports that I get, on a far bigger scale in other cities. In Cape Town alone, pest control companies put out, on average 12 tons of poison a month.

Here comes the conspiracy part..... Why is there a deafening or should it be deathly silence, please excuse the pun. Who are supposed to be the custodians of our raptors, the fearless protectors without favor etc? Why are there no public howls of outrage at the carnage that poisons are causing?

The large manufacturers of poisons are all sponsors of the very organizations alleged to be the custodians of our birds. The endorsement of allegedly “raptor friendly poison” by these organizations is comparable to Gun-Free South Africa endorsing the Winchester Fire-arms Company.

I follow one rule 'if it kills a rat, it kills a raptor' there is no raptor friendly poison. The organizations that accept funding from poison manufacturers and endorse their products are accepting blood money and adding to the slow and miserable deaths of hundreds of raptors, snakes and other indigenous predators.

Strange times, strange bed-fellows are all that I can say.....

*Anton Muller
“Flying a male
Lanner”*



The following paper was originally published in Honeyguide Sept. 2002, Vol 48 (2) and is published with the permission of Ron's widow, Deidre Hartley. Permission was requested of the Editor of Honeyguide and, although my letter was received, I had no response. One can only presume that, sadly, the current situation in Zimbabwe has superseded my request. Thanks to Ron's daughter, Emma, for preparing the text for publication.

STRATEGY FOR FALCONRY, RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

R.R. Hartley

Falconry was written into the law by way of section 46 (Parks and Wildlife Act 1975, Revised edition 1996). This gave rise to the National Parks Falconry Policy described by Thomson (2002) and Hartley (2001). The basis of section 46 is that species of raptors that are Specially Protected can be taken from the wild under permit. Access to wild hawks has been the basis to Zimbabwe falconry and led to the burgeoning research and conservation program (see Hartley 1993, 2000, Thomson 2002). In Zimbabwe, falconers have also recognized the value of taking raptors from the wild, in terms of running a program that is more classic old-fashioned falconry, and they have also resisted moves to commercialize the hawks. If the hawk cannot be used for falconry or captive breeding, it is ringed and released. In this context we subscribe to a policy of no exotics not production of hybrids. This is in keeping with a national conservation strategy of prioritizing indigenous habitats and species, being a key unique resource for its own sake, for the benefit of local communities and for ecotourism. Wild lands can be an extremely valuable resource and may prove pivotal in rural development program. Both our falconry practice and conservation objectives are aligned to this philosophy. We are committed to conserving habitats, raptors and their prey, and to increasing awareness by training our members the right way, so that the abiding paradigm is that the birds come first. We also want young falconers who are passionate about their sport. People are a key part of the conservation process.

While we benefit from the policy of wildlife utilization, and support the principals of commercialization in the wildlife industry, we have not subscribed to the commercialization of the raptors. This is because the principal raptors used in Zimbabwe falconry are Specially Protected, while all raptors are subject to CITES¹ regulations because of their vulnerability to trade. Raptors are prized in developed countries where they can fetch high prices (especially in Zimbabwe dollars).

Falconry safaris are another form of commercialization which is supported by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM) and the Zimbabwe Falconers' Club (ZFC), provided no exotic hawks are used and the falconer acts in accordance with the Code of Conduct prescribed by his permit (effectively a contract between the falconer and DNPWLM; see Hartley 2001). Payment is exclusively for the services of the falconer including his time. Despite some *ad hoc* falconry hunts by a few A grade falconers, and some creative ideas for such safaris, this concept has not really taken off. In the mid-1990's a group of A grade falconers formed a company dedicated to falconry safaris, but even this structured effort has failed to prove sustainable.

For over 20 years several businessmen have advanced the idea of falconry safaris servicing the lucrative Arab market, as the sport is so intensively practiced in the Middle East (see Allen 1980). Each of these approaches has been considered by Dr. Peter Mundy (Ornithologist of DNPWLM) in consultation with the ZFC. There are three stumbling blocks. First the Arab falconers would like to bring their falcons, which include Sakers *Falco cherrug* and hybrids. As they are exotics their importation will be contrary to policy. Secondly, the Arab market consists primarily of extremely wealthy Sheiks whose hunting trips are conducted on a large scale. The hunting party travels in a customized Jumbo Jet and the vehicles are moved in C130 transport planes. There is a large retinue of hunters and falcons, so that considerable quarry numbers must be located. Thirdly, the favored quarry consists of bustards and korhaans which are Specially Protected species in Zimbabwe, as they occur in relatively low densities. These species are more abundant in the more suitable habitats of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. It is these semi-arid and arid landscapes that Arab falconers seek for hunting areas.

From the ZFC's inception in 1970, its members have been involved in raptor research and have published their findings (see Hartley 2002). However, in 1976 with the adoption of the new government falconry policy, a more formal arrangement was put into place whereby graded falconers were obliged to report nest sites of the Specially Protected species they had harvested. Falconry coordinator Ron Thomson was able to make use of this information and the data bank of nest record cards formed a useful basis to seed a wider program. Arthur Dunkley took over from Ron Thomson as coordinator and set about improving the database of Peregrine *F. peregrinus minor* and Taita *F. fasciinucha* Falcon nest sites. In 1984 Peter Mundy started the Ornithological Research Unit (ORU) of DNPWLM and soon he made contact with the ZFC, facilitating and guiding further research work. The main thrust at that time was the joint program with the Peregrine Fund Inc. (TPF) on Teita Falcons (Weaver *et al.* 2002). In early 1986 Mundy (1987) listed various ideas for research projects by the ZFC:

1. **Falconry hawks:** weights, moult and plumage changes.
2. **Prey totals:** produce an annual scorecard for each hawk. The research idea is then to compare the prey captured by falconry birds versus what their 'wild' diet is thought to be.
3. **Studies on prey:**
 - a) weights, breeding condition and moult, and crop contents;
 - b) gamebird breeding;
 - c) assess hunting impact by focusing on one area and see how much pressure it can sustain;
 - d) examine ecology of longclaws *Macronyx* sp. By studying areas where three species overlap.
4. **Surveys of wild breeding falcons** viz. Peregrine, Teita and Lanner *F. biarmicus* Falcons.
5. **Sightings:**
 - a) any wild bird caught should be routinely weighed, measured and checked for moult, and these data should be kept at a central place;
 - b) any dead raptor should be kept and sent either to PM or the Natural History Museum;

- c) any sightings that are outside the range of Irwin (1981) should be noted;
 - d) list sightings of Specially Protected raptors.
6. **Ayers' Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus aryseii* is a little known raptor, so that any information on its habits should be collected.
 7. **Pesticides**- there is a continuing need to monitor the amounts of pesticides in raptor eggs, and their possible impact on breeding. The ZFC to collect addled eggs.
 8. **Captive breeding:**
 - a) the ZFC project on Peregrines is probably the only one in the world that is trying to breed *minor*. Already the club produces a good annual report on this;
 - b) determine the numbers of queleas that are required by a breeding pair in one year;
 - c) test the impact of queleas controlled by queletox as food to raptors;
 - d) examine the cause and nature of fault bars on captive reared hawks.
 9. **Bird strikes:** use trained falcons to see how effective they can be at airports.
 10. **Establish and maintain an archive.**

An examination of this Special Edition and ZFC bibliography (Hartley unpubl.) will attest to the fact that we have tackled virtually all of these issues in a meaningful way. Our core activities have focused on collecting data on predator and prey. In 1989 I took over the ZFC research program, formalized it as a distinctive entity and established a fund. Links with TPF were established and in 1990 we undertook an ambitious joint program on DDT impact on the Peregrine in Zimbabwe. This was successful and was followed by the establishment of a joint protocol with TPF, after liaison between myself and Rick Watson (TPF). Peter Mundy and I review progress and set goals and a program each year. This is relayed to Rick Watson for his input and support. TPF have provided support annually for the ZFC Research Program. Our program is considered an integral part of the ORU strategy (Mundy 2000). At a Raptor Research Group at Falcon College in August 1996, all raptor research programs in Zimbabwe were reviewed and analyzed. This helped to shape the future programs, and the ZFC Research Program has been described by Hartley (1993, 2000).

Current projects include:

1. **Batoka Gorge.** Community study run by RH, with a focus on Teita Falcon.
2. **Bubiana Conservency.** This focused on the role of hyrax in the distribution and status of Black, Crowned and African Hawk Eagles. Michael Drummond continued to monitor the population of six pairs of Black, three pairs of Crowned and four pairs of African Hawk Eagles in a 100km² study area.
3. **Triangle.** This continued to focus on the effect of sugar cane farming on the distribution and abundance of large winter breeding eagles at

Triangle. As the environmental officer at Triangle Ltd., Angus Middleton has continued this program as part of his work. It is still being done under the umbrella of the ZFC Research Program. War vets have hampered access to several of the sites.

4. **Malilangwe Conservation Trust (Chiredzi).** In July 2001 Angus Middleton started a monitoring program on the raptor community at Malilangwe Conservation Trust. Malilangwe has been recognized as having a diverse and abundant raptor population and has been compared to internationally recognized areas such as Matopos and the Snake River canyon. Angus' goals were based on recommendations made by Tom Cade during his visit in 1998, namely to: set up a monitoring system that can eventually be run with very little external assistance; ensure that the data collection is of a quality that allows for scientific research and is compatible with the GIS system at Malilangwe; train scouts and research technicians to undertake basic field work; target areas that appear under-represented; provide information for tourist activities; and reduce detrimental impacts on susceptible sites.
5. **Save Conservancy- Mokore Ranch.** RH is monitoring a population of Crowned Eagles *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, and building up data on the raptor community.
6. **Esigodini.** Monitoring of the raptor community around Falcon College by RH.
7. **Mbalabala.** Monitoring of the raptor community by RH.
8. **Status and distribution of Teita, Peregrine and Lanner *F. biarmicus* Falcons in Zimbabwe.** *Ad hoc* monitoring of selected sites continued. Neil Deacon continued to monitor Lanner and Peregrine sites in Harare city and RH did the same in Bulawayo.
9. **Marula (Matobo Hills).** Richard Peek assisted the survey on Black Eagles *Aquila verreauxii* at Marula. Richard also has several trained game scouts who collect data.
10. RH assisted other raptor workers in Zimbabwe. Farmer and naturalist Fin O'Donoghue has done fine work on raptors in the Karoi area and elsewhere in Zimbabwe. RH has assisted him in the preparation of notes and papers. Similar assistance was given to Falcon College student Russell Swanepoel who collated a study on Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* with his father (an ecologist), and a rancher Colin Edwards.

The program still collects addled eggs and eggshell fragments, which are measured and added to the database on eggshell thickness, part of the on-going monitoring of pesticide impact. Dead raptors are preserved for the Natural History Museum as specimens. Raptors that are trapped or recovered are weighed and measured and those fit for release are ringed. Four Ayres' Hawk Eagles were trapped and released this year. Another Ayres' Hawk Eagle was recovered injured on the edge of Harare and will be released when rehabilitated.

The captive breeding program includes Peregrine and Teita Falcons. Nearly 80 captive bred Peregrines have been released. The pool of Teita Falcons includes eight pairs and we should soon be in a position to release surplus birds into the wild. The education program has been strengthened by two certificate courses developed by RH at Falcon College. The first is a b grade certificate in falconry. The second is a certificate in raptor field biology.

Most graded falconers have contributed to the routine nest data system. Of the 120 current members of the ZFC, 28 have been involved as volunteers in the formal research program, as fieldworkers on trips and contributing to specific projects. At Falcon College 16 of the 67 full members over 19 years have participated tangibly to the research projects as fieldworkers. Falconers are generally passionate about their sport and the raptors they use. Many have a good touch with their birds and take easily to programs such as captive breeding. The hands-on approach comes with certain distinct advantages that the community of conservationists in Africa should recognize and make use of (see Hartley 2000).

In this volume we describe and celebrate a dynamic system which is still evolving. The selection of papers reflect the diversity of interests in the research and conservation program, from biology of single species to community studies that focus on diversity and ecology in large study areas. Although much of our efforts have been put into falconry hawks, there are studies on other lesser-known species such as Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides* and Montagu's Harrier. As there is relatively little population and density data on many African raptors (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001), including a paucity of community studies, two such studies are presented, one in a CAMPFIRE area in Siabuwa Communal Land and the other in the Save Conservancy. With increasing population pressure in rural areas of Zimbabwe there should be a greater emphasis on the integrity and conservation of habitats- hence community studies and biodiversity. Raptors can be used as indicators of the ecological well being of habitats. Diversity and abundance of raptors also characterize some of our cities and the hands-on program with Peregrines and Lanners in Harare is described.

Many hours have been spent on the elusive Teita Falcon and a set of unpublished information is presented from surveys in the 1980's. The first detailed description of captive breeding of Teita Falcons is presented. All of our skills in captive breeding have been gleaned from the long term captive breeding program with Peregrines.

All full papers have been peer reviewed and thanks are due to Neil Deacon, Michael Irwin, Angus Middleton, Peter Mundy and Rick Watson for all of their considerable help and influence. Colin Saunders kindly provided the articles by John Condy and Ron Thomson originally submitted to his *Century of Birding* (in prep.).

WHEN TO LET GO

Steven Squires

Art Haschak quoting from Zen and the Art of Archery says "the object in Archery is not to hit the target but to hit oneself". He suggests the same is true for falconry.

Falconry is a complex art. As such it gives us opportunity to reflect on our place in the universe and provide some lessons in life. What follows is possibly one of these.

Life is a renewable resource. That is every life except your own. If one examines this proposition more closely from your own selfish perspective it appears that life is not only renewable but that lives tend to have a sliding value, determined primarily by their proximity to you.

For example, the death of ten thousand people in an earthquake in central Asia is just a filler on the news. The death of fifty people in an aircraft accident in our own country is more disturbing, even more so if you know the place where it occurred. The death of a close friend, relative or spouse is most painful of all, and replacing them in your own life is most difficult. People with whom we have close relationships are the least renewable resource in the world.

What holds true for our feelings towards other humans is also true for our feelings towards animals, and, in the case of the falconer, for falcons.

Those falcons with whom we have had the closest relationships are the ones that hurt us the most when they depart or die. This is particularly true if they are flying well at the time of their demise. The pole sitters, the scratchers and biters, the permanently edgy and bad tempered birds are not so deeply mourned. Living with any unpleasant person or creature becomes a chore. Losing it is a relief.

Now this article is not aimed at the long winger who has not yet mastered his telemetry, much less the art of operant conditioning. This is aimed at the falconer who can keep his falcons for season after season until a restlessness sets in and flying and hunting them starts to feel like work.

We spend hours every day taming, training, conditioning, exercising and nurturing our chosen one. We think out novel ways of getting our point across, gaining the trust and goodwill of our partner to be. If we are successful we develop a relationship that spans an enormous divide. One so wide most people cannot credit that a free flying falcon will come back to you never mind do courtship displays, chup and call to you from a kill and sit fluffed up on your knee while you lubricate your throat in the evenings. These are the intimacies that we share on a daily basis. Why then do we ever want to change?

Relationships change over time as both personalities mature. What starts with the fresh bloom and hot blood of youth molts out into elegant adult plumage. The zestful unpredictability gives way to casual self confidence and finally to almost ridged conformity. We call this being wedded to a quarry, and I have seen it all too often in both people and birds.

Which falconer has never tried to fly starlings instead of doves, sandgrouse instead of francolin or snipe instead of ducks? Some falconers even change to Black Spars for a short period of time. However once hunting becomes routine we require variation in order to remain focused and committed. Without variation boredom sets in, accompanied by lack of interest, neglect and eventually the loss of the hawk usually in tragic circumstances.

Is it not better under these circumstances to break ties with the falcon while it can make a new life for itself, rather than letting it die from neglect or molder out its life on a block or in a pen? Better still is to prevent the falcon from becoming boring by flying it at a wide range of quarry under different circumstances. New challenges keep both falcon and falconer sharp.

I remember well the best falcon I have ever had was a Lanner tiercel, who took prey from white rumped swifts to Swainson's francolin. Even on a bad day he was never boring. I flew him for nine years.

Numerous peregrines on the other hand have all been more efficient predators, killing doves with clockwork precision, but once they reach sexual maturity at about three to four years of age they will fly little else

When this happens one is left with two choices, let your falconry become a mechanical and joyless affair like a stale marriage; or part company with your hawk and start afresh with a new one.

We all practice falconry as a recreation, to renew, invigorate and stimulate ourselves. When it no longer fulfills that function then something is wrong. This is when it makes sense to stop and take stock. When your falconry starts to feel like making love to your fat old wife, who wants to go to sleep and has a headache to boot, then the time has come to let go.

Take your falcon, feed her high on her kills and leave her to sleep out. Be there to feed her in the mornings if she needs you and soon she will cut the bond with surgical efficiency and once again my friend you will be a free man. Free to start again.

In the recent past I have chosen this route and have become convinced that like divorce, under certain circumstances, it is the best option for all parties. After all, life other than your own is renewable. Isn't it?

CASE DISCUSSION: NEMATODE INFECTION

Dawid Botes

Background information.

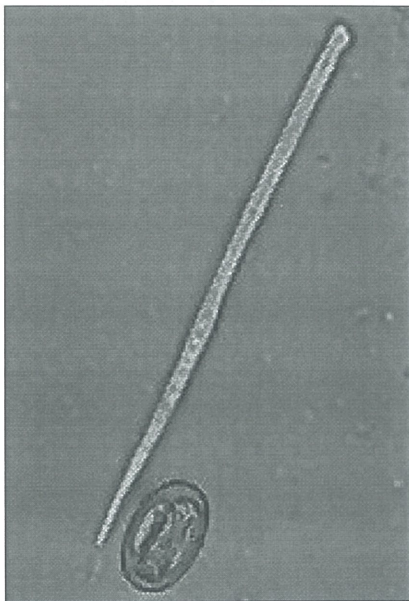
A newly caught lanner presented with foul smelling breath and foamy mutes. It presented with the following symptoms over time: reduced speed and strength in flight, weight loss (20gram).

Findings.

Microscopic evaluation of the mutes unveiled numerous eggs and hatched larvae of *Serratospiculum* spp. (*seurati*?).



Eggs of Serratospiculum and larvae head.



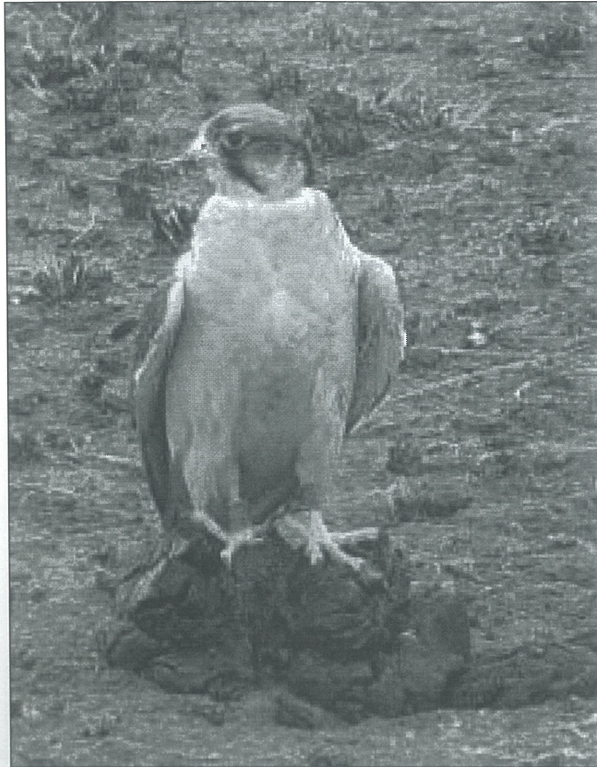
Egg and larvae of Serratospiculum



Larvae hatching

Discussion.

The Serratospiculiasis is a parasitic disease produced by nematode filarial worms. It is known to be transmitted in captivity by ingestion of infected beetles. After beetle ingestion, the L3 larvae are released from their capsule and penetrate the wall of the pro-ventriculus and ventriculus. Histopathologic evidence suggests that the migration to the air sac system is direct. After reaching the air sacs, the L3 larva undergoes 2 molts to produce the L5 or immature adult filarial worm. Adult parasites breed and



Lanner perched on a dung heap

produce large numbers of embryonated ova, which are coughed out through the trachea to the mouth, swallowed, and then excreted in the feces. *S seurati* was associated with pneumonia, airsacculitis, and early lesions of aspergillosis. Suggested treatment is fenbendazole 20mg/kg, sid orally 10-14d or mebendazole 20mg/kg, orally, 10-14 days (toxicity was reported by Heidenreich 1997). Tarrelo reported in an article in a French journal "PARASITE", suggesting a combination therapy of melarsomine at dosage of 0.25 mg/kg injected intramuscularly for two days, and ivermectin, injected once at the dose of 1 mg/kg, ten days later. In this particular case a single dose ivermectin 0.02ml/600gr orally was given. On day five eggs was observed in the mutes again. Follow-up treatment might be necessary.

In South Africa *Serratospiculum* may be more common than expected. The accompanying photo clearly demonstrates how a Lanner perched on a dung heap stooped down to take a beetle. This behavior explains how wild birds may be infected with *Serratospiculum*. Further work is needed on the prevalence of this genus in South Africa.



A manifest stoop at a dung beetle

ZIMBABWE, A NEW EXPERIENCE

Rion Lerm jnr

If I am not mistaken, it was Trevor Oertel that once said to me: "Zimbabwe is God's own country". As a falconer and naturalist, I would definitely not disagree.

I started working in the Save Valley Conservancy, Zimbabwe, in January 2008. It was the start of my practical year in Nature Conservation and I soon realised that Trevor was not far from wrong. My first day in the veldt produced a raptor nesting site in almost every Baobab tree and at least three different large raptors on the wing at any given time. It would be a challenge to any birder to beat that kind of raptorial delight elsewhere. A pair of Bateleur would keep one fascinated with their "balancing act" way of soaring, while being frowned upon by the seemingly more majestic Tawny Eagles perched on the branches of a Leadwood tree, while at least ten to twenty White-backed Vultures cross the sky in a fast glide.

Every new day brings with it fascinating new sightings of a variety of raptors, to lift the spirits of two would-be scientists slogging their way through endless vegetation surveys, whilst keeping a wary eye on more earthbound predators. The occasional African Hawk-eagle or even a rare vagrant, the Booted Eagle, gliding along riverine vegetation and rocky outcrops with seemingly effortless deep wingbeats seem totally ignorant to the joy that their passing bring to two earthly souls down below.

The sad farewell to Kailee (my Afgos) left behind in South Africa, brought with it a once in a lifetime opportunity, to walk the same turf and gaze upon the same skies as the late Ron Hartley had done till shortly before his passing away.

The Zimbabwean lowveld will hopefully once again bear witness to the sound of whistle and call, be it for Little Spar; Gabar or Ovambo, remains to be seen...



Photos: Limpopo Falconry

FIRST INTERNATIONAL FALCONRY FESTIVAL
Held at Englefield Estate, Theale, Redding, UK [14-15 July 2007]

Suzette du Toit

The lilting sound of a pale chanting goshawk rang out in the still afternoon – evocative of Africa and completely unexpected in the green, wooded acres of a magnificent English Country Estate. Rod and I were at Englefield Deer Estate in Redding, a small country town south west of London, and the venue for the first International Falconry Festival. The elegant grounds were as yet unexpectedly empty and devoid of life considering that the festival was due to start in three days time. A few tents, some scaffolding, electrical wires lying around and, here and there, small enclaves with weathering raptors. We vainly tried to find someone who knew where any of the organizers were, and equally vainly to find our two fellow South Africans.

Over the next two days things started to take off, tents and marquees went up, the VIP area next to the main ring got its sound systems, the miles of electrical cabling disappeared, and a babble of strange languages and accents filled the air. Exotically attired people unpacked boxes and trunks, decorating their stands. We watched in fascination as a Mongolian Yurt went up over three days. While not exactly easy to erect, they are beautifully constructed, and would certainly keep out minus degree cold (oh, and you too could have one for around BP 3000).

In spite of stomping for miles around the soggy estate, we still failed to make contact with anyone remotely interested in our arrival, but did meet up with Dawid and Barend Botes from the Limpopo Falconry Club who were camping on the estate. I was amused to be directed to 2 lonely little “micky mouse” tents, pitched in solitary splendour under an ancient tree, far removed from the fairground bustle. When Dawid and Barend had arrived at Heathrow, thieves relieved them of all the gear they had brought to help decorate our South African stand, so we set about making do - as in ‘a boer maak a plan’.

I drove to the nearest town and hastily had some (very expensive!) photographs printed to help decorate our tent, and only after Dawid and Barend had already improvised a table with old boxes and other people’s random discards, did we find out that we could go and collect a proper trestle elsewhere. The promised electricity to power my laptop failed to materialize until the second day, and then only lasted for a few hours, so that took care of any attempt at a digital display. However, we had lots of CD’s on SA falconry and Thys Walter’s sculpture to distribute, some Limpopo Falconry club pamphlets, a map, and some beaded proteas, table cloths and South African flags I had brought in my luggage, and these formed the basis of our very homely, but proud South African stand. Rodney enthusiastically manned it for us while we did our thing in the ring or were otherwise occupied, and I’m sure many people went away with some colourful if unconventional views of what falconry in our country was all about!

Each nation had a space allocated for them to set up their stand. The more colourful ones set up their traditional tents near the main arena, while lesser mortals shared

space with others in community tents on the outskirts. Stands and tents selling all kinds of falconry equipment and art mushroomed. A daily parade of nations took place in the main arena opposite the VIP marquee. For me, this was the fun part, as before it started we were all herded tightly into a holding area. Here you stood jammed cheek by jowl with a gathering of people from 37 nations, all - except for us South Africans and 2 Yanks - in their traditional national costumes, most with a raptor on their fists. Calm, regal eagles, the majority unhooded (oh - those gorgeous golden eagles, gotta have one before I die!), every type of hybrid, sakers, peregrines, exquisite white gyrs, sassy little merlins, seen-it-all Harris' hawks, goshawks, whatever. Photographers crowded around, flash bulbs popping, music and loudspeaker announcements blared, horses neighed, and generally a carnival atmosphere prevailed.

Each nation was introduced in the ring, and then paraded around carrying our national flags and little placards with the country's name, followed by the hunting dogs - all sizes, shapes, breeds and colours and all unfailingly, astonishingly, well behaved (well, with the exception of the Brittanys). Irish wolfhounds, lurchers, glamorous afgans (who clearly brought their own hairdresser along to tend to their ground length tresses), snooty salukis, pharos, munsterlanders, all the pointers, every type of spaniel, retrievers, cheeky jack russels, borzoi, a single stray staffie who sneaked in unnoticed, and many breeds I've never heard of.

Photographers crowded around the more glamorous nations - Arabs with their camels, salukis and sakers, Kyrgyzstans, Kazakhstans, Mongolians, Turkmenistans, Brits - complete with a Henry the 8th and his entourage, Japanese, Moroccans, Czechs, Chinese, the affable Belgians, and a lone but colourful Tunisian among others. And then there were us South Africans - not quite looking the part, as lacking a national costume (maybe a Zulu outfit with "traditional weapons" would have done the trick, who knows), we just wore our normal hunting gear, which thankfully included our gumboots, as the fields were a quagmire for the duration of the festival. Dawid got to carry a rather unamused and unhooded Martial eagle, and Barend was given a peregrine. Me? Humph!

The amazing thing about the raptors, camels, dogs and Arabian horses, was that due to quarantine restrictions, they all had to be sourced locally, so hats off to the organizers for getting that together so successfully. My particular pleasure was going to visit the camels every day. Could not resist their haughty, supercilious faces and just loved one particular rebellious, blue eyed adolescent.

In the ring, the breeze would change direction from time to time, carrying with it the ripe aroma of camel, causing consternation among the horses. That, coupled with the noise and general excitement, resulted in a few falls by riders, one of them pretty nasty.

I felt like a kid in a candy stall when I visited the equipment stands - wow! The choice of falconry furniture and the luxury of being able to buy anything your purse could stretch to - all spread out to be admired, handled and drooled over. My regret remains that I had brought so much stuff with me that I could not treat my Harris to an "Olympic sized" bath which she would so have enjoyed. And the books bought quite a few, including the Mavrogordato collection. Some nice falconry art

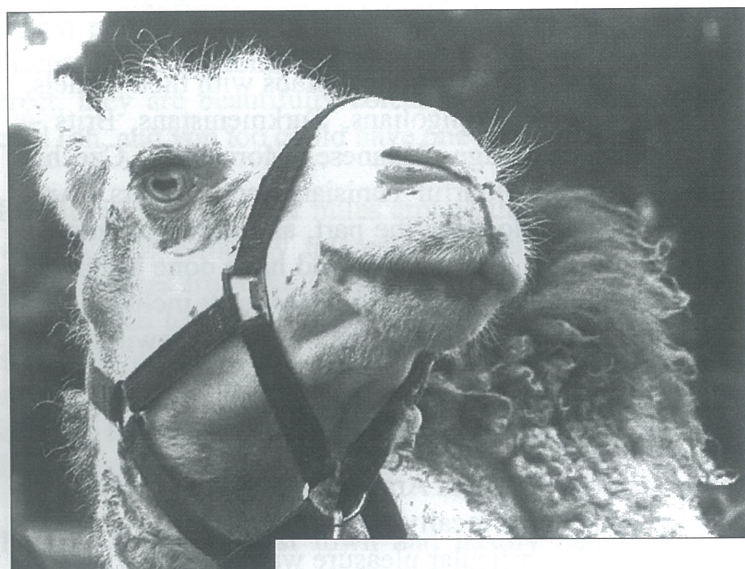
too. (My luggage ended up 14 kg overweight at the airport, but somehow managed to slip through a crack).

Sadly, although there was an interesting programme of demonstrations and talks, it was almost impossible to attend them due to the arena events, and manning one's stall. I did manage to get to one demonstration on how to fit your hawk's telemetry harness, but being vertically challenged, I couldn't see over the heads of the crowds!

The English summer being what it is, the rain came down nearly every day, but the terrible October floods held off until just after the festival ended.

Having always so wanted to see golden eagles in action, the main reason I had attended this Festival was because I was under the impression that there would be hunting as well. I was wrong.

We South Africans are a naturally hospitable people, and I am confident the organizers of the 2008 SAFA / IFA AGM meet will make an effort to greet and make attendees feel welcome – they too would have travelled a considerable distance to grace your event with their presence.



The following paper, first published in the North American Falconers' Association Journal 28:28-33. is reproduced by kind permission of Deidre Hartley. Thanks to Emma Hartley for preparing the paper for publication. Permission was requested of the Journal but no response was obtained. Ed.

HUNTING WITH THE AFRICAN HAWK EAGLE (*HIERAAETUS SPILOGASTER*) IN ZIMBABWE.

Ron Hartley

Although there are a great number of eagles in this country including an impressive range of species; the African hawk eagle has proved by far the most suitable, and it is the only eagle allowed on the general falconry permit. Other species that occur include the crowned (*Stephanoaetus coronatus*), martial (*Polamaetus bellicosus*), black (*Aquila verreauxii*), tawny (*Aquila rapax*), Ayre's (*Hieraaetus dubius*), Wahlberg's (*Aquila wahlbergi*), Bateleur (*Terathopius ecaudatus*) and the various snake eagles (*Circaetus* species).

A handsome bird, the African hawk eagle is very powerful for its size, while it is also particularly aggressive by nature. Falconers in this country have been flying these birds successfully for over twenty years (Hartley 1982) and considerable experience has been gained. Hawk eagles are flown in the manner of a shortwing and are worked at hares mainly and to a much lesser extent at gamebirds such as francolin (*Numida maleagris*). When hunting the latter, a pointing dog is normally a prerequisite, while the choice of terrain and cover is particularly critical. In Zimbabwe, hares (*Lagomorpha* species) are hunted mainly at night using the technique of spotlighting.

OBTAINING THE HAWK

Hawk Eagles occur throughout the country and are relatively easy to obtain as eyases. As they are specially protected, only B grade falconers are permitted to take them. In addition the permission of the landowner is also required before the hawk is taken or trapped. It is important to note that no efforts have been made to breed these hawks in captivity, while it is illegal to trade wildlife without a special permit. Consequently falconers must get their own eagles from the wild. Passage hawks and even haggards may also be trapped for falconry during the non-breeding season i.e. December to March. Eyases are usually kept ready for taking from July to September. Captive breeding operations in Zimbabwe have focussed almost exclusively on the peregrine (*Falco peregrinus minor*), because of its sensitivity to pesticides, its demand in falconry and because of its rarity with the ubiquitous lanner falcon (*Falco biarmicus biarmicus*) (Thomson 1984).

As hawk eagles normally lay two eggs with a subsequent Cain and Abel battle being the general rule, one of the two siblings can be removed to ensure that the adults rear one chick. Removal of one of the chicks must be done promptly as the Cain and Abel struggle tends to ensue within three days of the hatching of the second egg. Needless to say great care is necessary in the rearing of such a young downy to ensure healthy growth and to avoid producing a screamer. The chick in figure 3 was removed that day and she is still my main 'bunny cruncher'. Now seven years old, Cilla has taken nearly 800 hares in six seasons. Her first season was spent with another falconer, Brian Talbot, who became somewhat disenchanted with her when she took his wife's domestic cat. Cilla was taken by me and reared for the benefit of my senior biology students at Mutare Boys High School. She was then passed on to Brian Talbot.

Passage or sore hawks are preferred to the eyas as they have the obvious advantages of not being imprinted while they are much stronger on the wing and have more experience at hunting. Haggards are sometimes too wedded into the ways of the wild to settle completely, but this is not always the case. However, as a matter of principal in Zimbabwe we prefer to leave haggard eagles to the wild as they are valuable breeding stock. Passage or sore hawk eagles also have the added advantage of being shyer than eyases and are therefore less inclined to display the innately aggressive behavior of this species. Eyases are generally very aggressive. Few of them will bate away from the falconer, even in the very early stages of training. They remain fixed on the perch, bent towards the falconer in an unmistakable attitude of challenge. Usually they wait for a chance to foot their trainer. Great care is required in their handling to avoid being injured. They are extremely well armed for their size and are particularly powerful. For instance the back and front talons of Cilla measure 50mm and 45mm respectively, while the distance of middle toe to rear is 110mm.

HANDLING AND HUNTING THE AFRICAN HAWK EAGLE

Always ensure that the jesses are gathered firmly and are held tight. Do not weather them in sight of other smaller raptors as they will take the slightest opportunity to butcher them. A hawk in a N.A.F.A field meet area could prove an absolute disaster. Few austringers escape a couple of fierce bouts of footing before they get wiser to the antics of these bold little eagles. Invariably the hawk eagle helps to teach his austringer a few tricks regarding care and caution. Few experienced falconers take to this aspect of the eagle's temperament.

However, gentle handling over a season or more will normally result in a softening of this attitude, while most female will develop a strong pair bond with their handler as is the characteristic of many species of eagles. Consequently they become extremely well adjusted, most reliable and even facile to handle. Confidence and bold approaches are important if one is to reach this desirable state of affairs. I have seen a giant of a man show apprehension when his hawk eagle female was on a hare, unsure of how to take her off. The hawk eagle quickly sensed this, left the dead hare and chased the falconer with mean intent, to the unending delight of the spectators.

My two veteran hawk eagles, both females, Oswa and Cilla respectively, have proved exceptionally gentle to handle. However, from her second year onwards Oswa developed a pair bond with me; so that she became extremely intolerant of other people; especially if they were in my company too often. There was no mistaking her intentions; all of my colleagues treated her not just with respect but in awe. Cilla was imprinted on females as my girlfriend of the time helped to raise her. Consequently, she is tolerant of other people, and not, imprinted on me. She is not a screamer. The male do not seem to develop this pair bond behavior to the same extent as the females, if at all.

Male hawk eagles are somewhat smaller than the females; hunting between 1,050 g and 1,200 g, the average weight being around 1,100 g. Consequently they are sometimes kicked off scrub hares (*Lepus sexualities*), which weigh between 1,500 to 3,000 g. However the males are more maneuverable than the larger females which range from 1,300 to 1,600 g, and are often more suitable at francolin and guinea fowl. Females are preferred at hares, while some will also take the larger springhare (*Pedetes capensis*), which weighs about 3,500 g. in this country the females have

proved more useful all around, especially as the black sparrowhawk (*Accipiter melanoleucus*) is by far the most effective at gamehawking shortwing (Hartley 1981 and 1982).

Neither male nor female hawk eagles take gamebirds with any ease and few with any consistency. In fact it is rather difficult to succeed, because these eagles lack the perseverance of the *accipiters*, while they are also heavier and more cumbersome requiring more energy to make the testing follow up flights that are often necessary in this type of hunting. The black sparrowhawk has a much lower wing loading; a higher metabolic rate and can easily negotiate difficult cover, matching the deft evasive tactics of gamebirds. Hawk eagles often remain perched on the ground after a miss, either puzzled or looking dramatically at a foot full of guinea fowl feathers or the like! They rarely make off at the quarry again, having devoted their energy to a single powerful attack. If they chose to follow up, they take off rather slowly, losing too much ground to the fleeing quarry. Consequently success with the hawk eagle requires careful set ups; particularly in the early stages. The adage success breeds success is very pertinent in this context; so that regular killing will inspire the young hawk eagle to extend herself.

The set ups have to be well planned as a shortwing style chase is not altogether suited to these more sluggish falconry hawks. In the wild they often hunt from a soar. During the early stages of hunting an eyas hawk eagle may steam in after francolin and guinea fowl, but the latter, quick to identify the inherent abilities of their attackers, will often keep to the ground, relying on a crafty sidestep as an evasive action. They know that the hawk eagle will most likely plough into the dirt or cover next to them, spent and ill equipped to turn back the same way and pursue the now flying gamebird, fresh and desperate to get away. Predictably gamebirds do not employ the same tactics against the lighter, highly charged and persevering black sparrowhawk. More often they take to the wing of these sharper and more finely structured hawks. There are always exceptions to the rule and the following anecdote may add some colour to these thoughts.

Falconry colleague Rob James of Penhalonga once described an amusing incident which stemmed from the differential response of guinea fowl to his trained musket black sparrowhawk, Fred, and male African hawk eagle, Ringo. Was of our favorite hunting zones was Mountain Home Estate in the rolling hills and valleys sat of the Mozambique border above Penhalonga. Both the guinea fowl and rednecked francolin (*Francolinus afer swynnertoni*) were readily hunted as they flushed down the open grassy valleys, often putting into thick wet sponges (called vleis) or setting off on foot over the well-wooded spurs. At that stage Rob was intent on killing guineas fowl with his once intermewed hawk eagle, a particularly keen and aggressive male. In fact when Ringo was attacked by a spotted eagle owl (*Bubo-africanus*) when he was sleeping outside on his perch one night, he killed this bird. The following night the owls mate met with the same fate, with Ringo on the alert this time!

One of the flocks of guinea fowl on Mountain Home was used to being chased by the diminutive Fred (just 490.0 g) and tended to treat him with disdain, despite the fact that he sometimes pursued them with intent, even killing the odd juvenile. After an intensive period of hunting Fred in this area over a few weeks, one afternoon Rob gave Ringo a turn instead. When his English pointers put up the guinea fowl the flock

casually took off down the valley; but were shattered to see the rapacious Ringo bearing down on them instead of the plucky lightweight Fred! A single guinea fowl misjudged, struck a fence and was quickly silenced by the fiery hawk eagle.

Two key methods can achieve success at gamebirds using a hawk eagle. First hunting of the eagle from trees. It is usually quite simple to establish a routine whereby the eagle follows the austringer for considerable distances in this way. The area can be beaten for game preferably with the support of a dog for second phase work. Some hawk eagles will also circle around for a while and may well hold birds below for the dog to flush. This type of flying is to be encouraged, not the least because it can catalyse the fitness regime, an indispensable element in all successful hawking. No doubt in suitable terrain slope soaring has great potential as well. In the wild, hawk eagles often hunt from a soar and will even take sandgrouse and doves from a stoop. Secondly, hunting from a vehicle or a horse, whereby the gamebirds are flushed out ahead and preferably close by, with the eagle in a commanding position and the gamebirds unawares. For example a flock of guinea fowl may be seen on a farm road. One would crouch behind the cab of the truck so that the hawk eagle can see the quarry through the windows. As the vehicle approached the guineas the vehicle would accelerate to flush them and then one would spring up and release the eagle so that she might catch one on the rise. This may not be regarded as sporting however.

Personally I prefer to use a falcon or a black sparrowhawk against gamebirds. It is against the hares that the hawk eagle is most effective. They are suitable fast on the wing while they are rugged and powerful. When fit they will always give a very good account on fur. Rarely do they break feathers, while they can endure an awful amount of kicking and physical adversity when tackling their prey. They are the 'pit bulls' of our hawking scene.

Hares can be taken by day or at night using a spotlight. In our region hares are mainly nocturnal while cover conditions can be difficult for daytime work in some areas. At night hares often come onto roadways, while they also favour short grassy areas for feeding such as airstrips and sports fields, the edges of coffee lands and so on. Moreover they are often very common particularly in the drier thorn savanna scrub of Matabeleland, where I live; so that an African hawk eagle like Cilla is easily kept busy.

Hawk eagles will also tackle mongooses (*Herpestinae* sub family), polecats (*Mustalinae* sub family) and even genets (*Viverrinae* sub family), but owing to the danger of bites and even the danger of rabies these are not generally hunted.

Before successfully entering an eyas, it is strongly recommended that regular work on a dragged lure is employed to improve the qualities of footing. It is surprising how many of our austringers neglect this aspect. When using the lure ensure that the eagle is forced to practice with both feet. In other words drag the lure in two separate directions so that the eagle has to turn left to catch it and then repeat for the right turn.

ANECDOTES-GENERAL

Falconry has its cycles in our region and the craze for hawk eagles was at its peak in the early and mid seventies. Some excellent birds were flown such as Roger Nielsen's "Ham", Dave Fowler's "Fury", the author's "Oswa", Rudi Giessweins' "Gypsy",

Peter Allan's "Harry", Adrian Lomabards "Blitz", Nick Norman's "Zeek", Tom Davidson's "Keba", and Brian Talbot's "Diana". Three of these eagles were males. Since then other excellent hawk eagles have included George McAllister's "Helga", Jonny Harris's "Wafa", Blake Osborne's "Sauron", and the authors "Cilla". Meanwhile Tom Davidson's hawk eagle "Henry" had her best hunting days in Natal, South Africa. There were others as well.

Some hilarious evening, were had flying these eagles at hares, especially the 'relay' between Oswa, Gypsy and Harry, when we would crush together in an old series one Landrover, sometimes using the eagles on the same evasive hare in sequence. Thus, when one eagle missed, the falconer would jump off in the dark and secure his bird, while the chase would continue. Many times the vehicle would return to pick up the team only to report that the hare had beaten them all. Occasionally a falconer would be lost in the excitement of having fallen off the rattling and bouncing vehicle. One evening Peter Allan was only discovered missing after a couple of kilometers of driving!

EARLY DAYS WITH "OSWA"

We had just arrived on the host's ranch in the Umvuma area, when some bright eyes bounced in front of the headlights ahead. Three springhares crossed the road, their kangaroo-like structure and gait most characteristic. My year old passage hawk eagle Oswa was perched on my fist, hooded. A particularly willing hunter, she was highly effective on these hopping rodents. We stopped the Renault 4, attached the spotlight, unleashed and unhooded Oswa and set off. The 200 acre ranch consists largely of sandveld; suitable habitat for springhares and scrub hares. Five minutes later the scanning light revealed a maze of bright eyes. Oswa bated immediately and I let her fly off into the cone of the beam. She broke away to the left, flying hard and purposefully, while the beam followed the springhare bouncing off to the right, Oswa now curving round to follow it, gaining rapidly, but keeping out of the beam; so as not to show a shadow on her quarry. With a surge of speed she converged on the fleeing animal, which appeared to have heard the rhythmic jangling of her bells behind. The tawny creature with its long black-ended tail went skidding into the earth, kicking against the tail section of the muscle-taut bird, her wings outstretched for stability.

Five minutes later Oswa was back on the fist ready for another slip. Two more springhares are bagged in the same fashion. Then she took a scrub hare, after losing it on the first attempt. Quickly she took off the ground, made up the distance on the sprinting hare and bowled it over. The next hare was missed, but she swung around and turned back to the vehicle, landing on the fist. It was about time to finish. She had worked hard and deserved to be fed up on a kill. Nevertheless she was fit and in shape to take a couple more if required. She took a springhare in mid-bounce and they crashed into the bare sandy mounds around the quarry's warren. Oswa was fed up. A trickle of fresh blood down the glove aroused suspicion, a close examination revealing an amputated lateral talon. Unfortunately this talon had found its way into the springhare's mouth while she had secured the animal with her characteristic head lock. She lost another talon in the same way four years later.

Oswa worked consistently for ten seasons, taking 813 hare, including many springhares. In fact she is one of the few trained Zimbabwe Hawk Eagles that killed

springhares regularly. She often bound to steenbok (*Raphicerus campestris*) and even pulled down five only to have them kick her off. A steenbok is a small antelope that weighs about 11 kgs.

A constant companion for ten seasons I was devastated to find her dismembered body hanging from a screen perch in her pen one morning. A civet cat (*Civettictus civetta*) had forced its way into her pen and killed her. Parts on her body were taken away and cached and I found her head buried under some debris in a dry watercourse nearby. I felt obliged to send the civet to heaven and he was duly dispatched after some careful work. I owe this article to Oswa and to her it is dedicated.

FURTHER ACTION WITH THE AVIAN 'PIT BULLS'.

One of the finest hawk eagles flown was Brian Talbot's Diana, a perfectly mannered eyas female. Very sweet to handle she would sometimes lie down in Brian's lap in the car. She was never aggressive to her handler, while she did not threaten others either. She has the best record for hunting gamebirds, taking a good bag over Dave Fowler's champion English pointers, Gina and Kerry. One afternoon she killed a steenbok, still the only hawk eagle to achieve this feat. She took guinea fowl, Swainson's francolin (*Francolinus swainsoni*) and the diminutive and agile coqui (*Francolinus coqui*).

Many novice falconers have been hooked on the idea that the African hawk eagle must be the ultimate all round pot hunter. A perusal of the standard ornithological works of the region such as MacLean (1985) and Steyn (1982) reveals an encouraging picture. This opinion was at its height during the seventies and resulted in some hard, but somewhat dispiriting action. Several hardy young falconers have spent many hours slogging through the veldt, burdened with the load of a female hawk eagle, to learn inevitably that the southern African hawking experience reinforces that the black sparrowhawk, lanner falcon and peregrine are the best tools in this business. It is on hares that the bigger bird excels.

A hawk eagle can endure an extraordinary amount of physical battle during an evening's hare hunting. When in need of bulk foods Oswa and Cilla have taken as many as eight or nine of these animals. Both of them have always roused vigorously on the fist after a kill, which signals their willingness to hunt again—textbook style. When they cease rousing it is evident that they have had enough, although they will still continue to hunt on some occasions.

They are generally very good in a crowd. Both Oswa and Cilla have seemed to have thrived when there is a mob on the truck at a field meet, for instance even when there is another crowded vehicle alongside. During the war, when on duty in the bush, Oswa often accompanied me, getting an opportunity to hunt from a military Unimog; crowded with interested soldiers. She was always very settled, hunting eagerly and effectively. Cilla sometimes returns to the vehicle after an unsuccessful foray, only to land on the head or shoulder of one of the spectators!

One of the most memorable periods I have experienced in hawk eagle hunting was during the war, when colleague Tom Davidson was flying his eyas female Keba. Tom was the brigadier commanding the massive and highly operational zone called "Thrasher", which extended along the eastern border of Zimbabwe (then called Rhodesia). As I lived in the capital of Mutare where he was based we came to do a lot of hawking around the town, while Tom often called on me to assist him with his

falconry. Even in the field when I was on call-up some of the officers would find it incomprehensible when the army commander would allocate some time to chatting to a mere soldier like me—our talk was all haking lore and experiences! We became good friends and still keep in regular contact, as he is the secretary of the Natal Falconry Club in South Africa. At that time (1977 to 1980) our area was particularly dangerous and there were thousands of guerrilla soldiers around. This never interrupted my falconry and apart from a 45 Colt Combat Commander pistol with seven magazines as part of my essential hawking gear (a rig I still keep handy and have had to tote ever since 1980 in Matabeleland where I now live) my servant Masuse used to carry my service rifle a 7.62 calibre FN. Tom used to join me on some hunting forays, bringing a military landrover or Unimog, plus an armed escort. Oswa was rather famous and was always introduced to the other officers and guests as the great star she was, never letting us down in the field. Tom's, Keba, was also a highly efficient operator. We had many action packed evenings.

One evening whilst hunting around Mutare city I suggested to Tom that as we are struggling to find hares in our well used zone, we should drive south just out of town into a tribal area, where I knew some excellent spots. Being the army commander his proposed movements were signaled back to base, which soon set up alarm bells, as my targeted hunting zone was in the middle of a highly subverted area. Immediately the elite hunter-killer Fire Force unit was put on stand by (commando troops and helicopter gun ships), while we swanned around the rural settlement in the dark killing several hares on the well grazed pastures. The following day I was summoned by the Brigade Major, Pete Farndell, whose appreciation was caustic and unprintable!

Another evening in the rural area north of the city we enjoyed an excellent evening's action, to learn later that a guerrilla unit was based in the bush near our route. Two weeks later that group massacred eight villagers at night on the same estate.

During this period some of the army units had live mascots, including the support commando with their female eyas hawk eagle, Henry. Curiously two hawk eagle females owned by military personnel had names of the wrong gender, Henry and Peter Allan's, Harry (also the largest female that has been hunted in this country, keen at 1,600 g). Henry has been taken illegally in 1977 and traveled extensively with the very active commando unit throughout the operational area, subjected to small arms and mortar fire on a number of occasions (Davidson 1985). As none of her handlers were competent falconers she achieved little and was sent to me three years later. In fact her only kill was a chicken. The disgruntled OC was convinced that she was useless. Well manned and settled she was quickly brought into hunting condition and I managed to take a rednecked francolin with her during the day and eight hares at night. She killed the first hare I showed her. Soon after returning her to the unit, Tom Davidson made a successful claim on her which resulted in a highly successful partnership extending to 1986 when she died. I have taken the liberty of including a couple of anecdotes about Henry taken from an article about Tom (1985):

Whilst with support commando an amusing incident took place when Henry was called upon to demonstrate her skills. A display was organized and a rabbit was produced. Needless to say an overweight bird showed no interest. This so embarrassed the OC that a further display was arranged with a chicken. This had similar results and the ridiculous situation arose when after

being cast off she settled in a tree nearby, but the chicken continued searching for food immediately below her. Henry was in disgrace, as was the handler.

As an oversight for a punishment no one recalls but she was not fed for a couple of days. The next display was in complete contrast. The chicken was caught before it knew what was happening. Its owner, one of the batmen who had already made a fair amount of money with side bets now realized that not only had he lost all his recent bets but he was about to lose his asset as well. An appeal was made to the OC who stepped out to save the unfortunate chicken, which was very much still alive, but totally immobile. A fairly vicious tussle ensued which ended up with Henry attacking the OC. This chap, Pat Armstrong, now lives in Johannesburg and describes it as quite a frightening experience.

At a later stage she was handed over to Ron Hartley who took over her training for a while. On one occasion while exercising her in his yard, Ron was approached by a man who wanted to purchase a chicken. The sale over, the man took his departure having been warned by Ron to conceal it, as there was a hawk eagle in a tree nearby. Halfway down the drive, Henry took the chicken from under his arm. (I also quipped that he should pay me a bit extra as the chicken had now been slaughtered and was busy being plucked!).

On arriving home the first time with her I immediately weighed her and found that she was above 1,700 g, which was well above her flying weight. I found later that she would hunt reasonably 1,500 g, but her best weight is about 1,440 g.

My cottage was on a 20-acre plot with the main house some distance away. On one occasion while exercising her, she flew across and settled on the roof of this house. Soon afterwards the owner appeared with her Corgi dog. Henry promptly seized the dog. Although both feet were on the head there was fortunately no claw penetration. After a struggle the situation was restored and no damage was done. I very nearly lost my cottage though!

In April 1980 I decided to move to South Africa. I left her with my old friend Ron Hartley, having made all the necessary arrangements for her to move to Natal.

Three months later she arrived with an airhostess friend of mine in a special box I had. Customs would not release her until she had been examined by a government vet. This August gentlemen arrived two hours later and after a 'Christ what a bird' signed a document and her examination was complete."

Another Zimbabwe hawk eagle that graced the Natal hawking scene was Blake Osborne's. Sauron. An eyas female that was hunted intensively on gamebirds in her first season she proved moderately successful, taking several guinea fowl and francolin around Mutare. Blake was also determined to make a hawk eagle to gamebirds, but he relented after this season and used a black sparrowhawk thereafter, saving Sauron for night hunting hares. Very well drilled Sauron as an exemplary 'bunny hunter', chasing hard, obedient and very tenacious. She hunted for two seasons in Zimbabwe before Blake moved back to Natal, where she continued to

work, albeit with a much lower frequency of action than she had enjoyed here. She was killed tragically last year by a laborer after she had strayed downwind overnight to kill a chicken in his yard. She had given Blake eight great years of action.

¹Falconry is a legal pursuit in Zimbabwe administered by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. Permits are issued in terms of a code of conduct which in effect a signed a signed contract between the falconer and the Director of the department. The permit prescribes certain species and numbers of Specially Protected species which may be taken for the purposes of falconry. These are: the peregrine falcon, lanner falcon, African hawk eagle and the Black Sparrowhawk. In order to fly one of these birds, a falconer has to satisfy one of the appointed falconry examiners that he has reached an approved level of proficiency with one of the non-protected species. To gain a permit to fly a peregrine, a falconer has to satisfy two specially appointed A grade falconry examiners together with an additional A grade falconer that he has flown a lanner with good success. This has to be done on the field on a number of occasions, while the applicant must also own a well trained falconry dog. All applicants for A grade licences are scrutinized by an appointed member of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, the Falconry Coordinator. As a result falconers are graded into either A, B or C categories. Grade A falconers may fly any of the birds listed above, while grade B falconers may fly only non-protected species (Hartley 1987). A grade C falconer must satisfy an appointed falconry examiner that he is competent at training, managing and hunting his non-protected hawk before he will be granted a grade B licence. The aim of this system in primarily to protect Specially Protected species, and in particular the peregrine. The results have been excellent, including the high standard of falconry that persists in this country today. The system has been in operation for fourteen years. Examiners are all experienced falconers, including the National Parks Falconry Coordinator.

²The Cain and Abel struggle characterizes the breeding biology of our eagles such as the African hawk eagle, black eagle and tawny eagle. These birds normally lay two eggs, but only once one of the hatched eggs yields a fledged chick as within the first few days after the hatching of the second egg a life and death struggle ensues between the siblings, inevitably resulting in the demise of the younger second chick.

³Other species of francolin found in Zimbabwe and hunted are: natal (*Francolinus natalensis*, redbilled (*Francolinus adspersis*), crested (*Francolinus sephaena*) and Shelley's (*Francolinus shelleyi*).

⁴ At that time Rhodesia, as it was then called, was at war. The "Liberation Struggle" was a particularly bloody and protracted affair. Nearly all able-bodied men were involved in some way or other Conscription as obligatory. Peace came in 1980, with the birth of Zimbabwe.

⁵ Regarding the export of raptors from Zimbabwe. It is relevant to add that the export of raptors from this country is permitted only for educational and scientific purposes, which does not include falconry.



HUNTING WITH A MALE LANNER FALCON

Anton Muller

The 2007 hawking season was one that held some great surprises for me as a falconer. My peregrine breeding failed to produce chicks, and yet another season I was without a planned bird to fly. Being a farmer I had a hectic planting season and moved house, so by March I still had no bird to fly. But a nice sunny autumn morning my mind was steadied on the lanner falcon as my obvious choice. I was sitting in a John Deere combine busy harvesting sunflowers, a spotted eagle owl was flushed and it flew out in front of the combine and sat on a sunflower about fifty meters ahead. The next scene I witnessed took my mind quit a few seconds to process: the owl was flopping on the ground, a few feathers floated in the breeze and in the corner of my vision I focused on the familiar shape of a falcon throw-up. A passage lanner tiercel had struck the sitting owl to the ground, luckily the owl gathered himself, but by now the combine was right on him again and he had to fly. I couldn't see the falcon but was expecting him very soon, and sure enough he came. Seemingly with the intend to kill but not with the previous speed the bold lanner came in from the side and the owl managed to dump in the sunflowers but again in the harvesting path of the combine. And the same scene was played over and over again for the senseless owl kept landing in front of the combine and the lanner was now circling the combine like a made hawk over a pointer. As a boy I read in Peter Steyn's book on raptors of the spotted eagle owl preying on a lanner falcon, it seemed like such a waste to me at that time. This mentioned incident was like a pay back in my mind.

It seems like researchers and scientists keeps on proclaiming what the previous guy wrote or said. For in bird books lanners are described as a falcon that hunts least often in the manner of a stoop and the peregrine almost exclusively by stooping. I am not a scientist but I am a raptor student, have keen eyes and spent most of my time outdoor and my humble experience is that lanners prefer hunting from a stoop and will hunt in level flight if the initial stoop fail to kill, if the weather doesn't permit ascending flight or if quarry is super abundant and numerous attacks can be made from perches. Comparing the flight and build of the lanner to the peregrine in simple terms, the lanner is the one without the turbo. So the lanner stands to gain the greatest benefit from a high pitch over fast quarry. I have seen a peregrine launching from a center pivot in a level attack on incoming pigeons and kill, a lanner will be mocked by the pigeons. But later after the flocks have settled in the fields it would be the hissing noise that draws your eyes to a projectile skimming the ground and hurtling to a rising flock of pigeons far ahead. If lanners are sitters they must be sitting on satellites to stoop like that.

I trapped a male lanner, weighing in at 460 grams. First free flight was 18 days later, but being fed on lure and hand for that time this lanner had made up his mind. He perched on the ground for the free meal and kept bobbing his head as to hurry me into producing. I walked away, he followed hopping. How do I make this bird fly? I opted to sit it out and pretended not to take any notice. Thirty minutes later he took off and hooked a thermal. Being a bit nervous about the first free flight I rewarded him at a 300 feet pitch. The following day he took flight straight away after being un-hooded. Two weeks later he could be trusted to thermal to incredible height and come over when signaled by a waving hand. He was ready to be hunted.

From experience with two lanners I flew previously, I realized that the challenge lies ahead: to get the falcon's attention from me onto the quarry. Previous responses to quarry when starting to hunt, varied from a total ignore on easy quarry, a sluggish chase or a hard stoop but no contact. Always the falcon would be looking over the shoulder to see when the lure pops out. What worked for me with this lanner was a tight flying weight, easy quarry in the beginning and most importantly a full gorge after a kill. I kept the lure attractive by rewarding well but only used it when there were no chance of catching quarry or if the falcon drifted away too far. Later in the season after many kills this lanner figured me out. I started flying him at a higher weight; he would mount perfectly, ignore the quarry and then start drifting away. When starting to go out of vision, I frantically started swinging the lure right on his queue. He would return in a long slow stoop to claim his lure. It took me about a week to figure out this behavior, and after readjusting the flying weight, calling him back to an empty lure and letting him sleep hungry, he started hunting again. Lanners are really smart.

My intent was to thermal this lanner exclusively, but consecutive days of strong wind and work obligations made me fly in non thermal conditions. With the mindset of a high pitch resulting in a kill well established, this little lanner worked himself up to 500 feet easily on windy days and much higher when the air was still and cold. He proved to be a versatile hunter by killing from a thermal, in relative strong wind, early morning flights and late afternoon flights. I certainly made a mind shift about lanners. In my opinion thermaling can be used to establish the pitch and then gradually move on to other conditions. To thermal a lanner is not as risky as with a peregrine for lanners become very steady and their smaller killing cone rules out a lot of check on the horizon. Pigeons and doves as check were mostly ignored but swarming flocks of small birds is another story.

With great pitch overhead, the next question was: what to hunt? Red billed teal, crowned plovers, Cape turtle dove, laughing doves, Orange River partridge, Swainson's spur fowl (hens) and Namaqua sand grouse was all taken during the season. While taking teal readily, the tiercel refused partridges in the beginning but with a bit of conditioning started to take them eagerly. The first crowned plover was struck to the ground from a good pitch; I flushed it by accident when trying to flush sand grouse. Both the plovers were taken in the same manner, the falcon would stoop what would seem to be past the plover and then turn at a 90 degree angle to deliver a side strike. The plovers which are renowned for their evasive actions had no answer for this technique; it must be technique the lanneret acquired in its passage days. I tried to hunt more plovers but realized that assistance is necessary from another person to spot and keep the location of the plovers, while the falconer put the falcon up a good 500 meters away in order not to flush the plovers as the falcon take off. With the falcon at pitch the plovers crouch and if their exact location is not known they are impossible to flush for the overhead falcon.

In winter there is an influx of sand grouse in the north western Free State. I managed to find the sleeping ground of these strong flyers in an overgrazed sandy area. They would come in from about 17h15 which left me with good time to fly them before dark. They sit very tight and the falcon can be cast off from a distance of about 100 meters. Location of the sand grouse is critical when the falcon is at pitch for only by

almost stepping on them they would take flight. The first flight at them with the lanneret was like an eye opener to me and the falcon, being not right overhead when the grouse flushed the lanneret managed to pull in behind the flock and gain on them to within ten meters. But dropping a gear, as it seemed, the sand grouse pulled away and left the lanneret looking silly, with them departing at a 45 degree angle for the Kalahari. The next two days the falcon managed to pull feathers on both flights, the pitch was getting higher and the position right overhead. On the fourth attempt the variables of a falcon, quarry and a timely flush all came together and the lanneret struck a sand grouse from the air with a thud that I heard clearly from a distance of 200 meters and a memorable cloud of feathers floating to the ground. With the grouse flushed at my feet and the contact made at a distance of about 200 meters one can start appreciating the speed of the quarry and the pitch that is necessary for the falcon. The lanneret caught another one out of three more attempts but then the sand grouse departed for safer sleeping grounds which I was not able to locate. Sand grouse is one of the most exciting quarries to hunt for me and they certainly make a falcon fly high and stoop hard.

Doves were the substitute when the sand grouse left and entertained me with incredible stoops and strikes. I did also learn that strong discipline is necessary from the falconer as to only fly doves where they can be cleanly flushed and the next cover far enough for the falcon to stoop with success. I quickly came in the habit of flushing and flushing till the dove gets caught. Invariable the pitch lowered drastically and the falcon started to stoop prematurely resulting in doves doubling back for the same cover I have just flushed them from. When realizing my mistake and taking the necessary actions I enjoyed wonderful stoops and strikes again. The nice aspect about doves and sand grouse is the way the falcon strikes them- no brakes whatsoever resulting in a mini explosion of feathers and the luckless dove cart wheeling to the ground where the falcon claims his well deserved price. Well deserved for doves flown in first and second phase flushing is very difficult and worthy quarry.



Much has been said about lanners and their potential as a falconry bird, they are prized and loved by all but not necessarily seriously flown, definitely used as the stepping stone to the supreme peregrine. With this mindset a lot of good falconry is lost and many good lanners are not flown to their full capabilities. Yes the peregrine is stronger, faster and naturally more aggressive. But if you get your lanner at pitch, overhead and in hunting mode it will be just as deadly as a peregrine with a few distinct advantages. Check becomes less of a problem and lanners break off sooner after quarry so lanners can be flown in a lot of areas unsuitable for a peregrine. Lanners rely more on the falconer and become very steady and trusty even at incredible pitches thus giving falconry with little or no tracking in a season. Binding to quarry is rare and strikes are the preferred hunting technique making the flights very spectacular. Because you are forced to flush in a smaller killing cone of the lanner you actually get a better view of the kills. The saying: 'Different horses for different courses', sums up my opinion of the lanner falcon where I would give the lanner the tag of trusty and willing ride horse.

The Following paper was originally published in Africa-Birds and Birding Vol.4 (1) 1999 and is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor with the assistance of Deidre and Emma Hartley.- Ed.

AVIAN BULLETS, PEREGRINE FALCONS IN THE SAVANNAH

Text by Ron Hartley

The brown and gold head of a male Coqui Francolin tilted upwards as we aimed our telephoto lenses. 'Keah, keah' came the wail above our heads, diverting us from this tantalizing opportunity, and a Peregrine Falcon swooped over the mountain acacia woodland before landing on a dead tree some 15 meters away. We tailed again with the lenses as the falcon dropped off the branch a moment later, sailing in front of the huge sandstone cliff of the Chizarira escarpment. 'Keah, keah' she wailed again, and then 'eechip, eechip, eechip chip' was heard from the male as he delivered a plucked bird in mid air. She took it in her claws and flew along the cliff and around a buttress. We lost that opportunity as well; unable to mark exactly where she had gone.

Arthur Dunkley and I were surveying and monitoring falcon breeding in the Sebungwe region of Zimbabwe in 1986. Below us lay the Zambezi Valley, dry deciduous woodland with patches of mopane forest and baobabs. Access to the area was on foot, mainly along ancient elephant trails. The huge pachyderms still wandered extensively throughout a region that is the current destination of many subsistence farmers. The eradication of the tsetse fly by the spraying of DDT has accelerated this immigration over the past ten years, and a recent completion of a tar road through Gokwe has speeded it up even more.

Our particular concern at this time was the rare Teita Falcon, especially as two Teita nests found in 1984; only two kilometers apart appeared to have failed then and over successive seasons. Wherever there have been Taitas, Peregrine Falcons have been found alongside them at higher densities. We suspected that the recent spraying of DDT was a key problem in the failed breeding attempts, but had not hard data to support this. The river systems of Chizarira drain into Lake Kariba, about 60

kilometres away, and some eggs collected from African Fish Eagles along the lake shore and from African Goshawks in the woodlands nearby had significant levels of DDT and its metabolite DDE. Already shells were thinning, but the ultimate test is productivity: are the adults producing young?

We were at Sebungwe to find out. Well positioned on the buttress, we spotted the next food delivery about an hour later, and the falcon took another plucked bird into the huge sandstone face, landing at the edge of a slit about halfway down. Two downy white chicks were tucked at the back of the well-shaded recess and soon they were being fed small pieces of meat ripped from the carcass by the adult and proffered gently in her beak to the eager youngsters. Four years later, a single egg was removed from this pair, as part of a nationwide survey on the impact of DDT on the Peregrine Falcon. The pair successfully raised a single chick from the two eggs remaining but analysis of the sample indicated seriously high levels of DDT and DDE, significantly higher than for any of the 12 other sites surveyed in the country. Although the highest levels of contamination were found in the Zambezi Valley, the productivity of Peregrine Falcons there has not yet shown a meaningful decline.

In Zimbabwe, Peregrine Falcons can be found virtually anywhere, from First Street in the capital Harare to Victoria Falls. However, they are most abundant in well-wooded parts of the Zambezi Valley, where 37 percent of 136 nest sites have been found along escarpments, gorges and inselbergs. Here they sometimes outnumber the Lanner Falcon 10 to one, whereas on the granite shield of the highveld and middleveld the Lanner is usually more common, especially in degraded areas where woodland has been cleared for cultivation, making conditions infinitely more favorable for the generalist.

Of the two species, the Lanner has a more catholic diet, which includes rodents and reptiles as well as birds, since its lower wing loading allows it to hunt effectively on the ground. By contrast, the Peregrine is a specialist with a high wing loading, feeding almost exclusively on birds taken on the wing; it rarely takes quarry on the ground. Furthermore, Lanners often breed on kopjes and small clustered boulders of granite called tors, which are avoided by Peregrines. However, both species compete for nesting sites on large domed inselbergs.

The optimum breeding areas for Peregrines in Zimbabwe are cliff sites in well-wooded country within striking range of river systems, where they are more successful than Lanners. In this dry habitat their avian prey is forced to fly over the canopy to water, and the river systems also offer natural corridors over which some species fly. A falcon relying on high speed attack, the Peregrine can intercept such prey over the top of the canopy more effectively than the Lanner can, and its much bigger feet with a long middle toe, adapted for clutching prey in the air, give it an additional advantage over its rival.

The Lanner is probably constrained by closed canopy woodland, which reduces its opportunities to take ground prey, but it makes better use of more open habitats where avian prey is scarcer. Indeed, it is in open areas that the Lanner has developed a predilection for young poultry, common in degraded communal lands where kraals are frequent. In the Matobo hills Lanners are more common in the communal lands than in the neighboring national park! A few subsistence farmers have learned to trap problem Lanners, using falconry techniques such as nets. Once I received an immature Lanner from the Matobo Hills area caught this way.

The Peregrine is well known for its occupation of cities, with breeding reported also from Nairobi and Cape Town. When a pair monitored by the Zimbabwe Falconers' Club (ZFC) in Harare lost two of their eggs, two captive bred young were

placed in the nest. Publicity surrounding this action led to some useful public involvement, as both fledglings had problems when they left the nest. It is not unusual for newly fledged young to experience difficulties, as streets in the central business district are like canyons. If the fledglings plummet down to street level, there are few hiding places for them, and traffic is a hazard. Adults trying to feed youngsters on the ground are also placed at risk. In Bulawayo, an immature female was recovered injured on a street, waterlogged and in egg lethargy. She laid an egg in captivity a few days later. The following year another immature female bred in the city, producing a clutch of three eggs, which were eventually found broken.

Peregrines which have made their home in cities sometimes collide with buildings whilst hunting their prey, and I have had the opportunity to study four such individuals from Harare. A male was stunned and broke his maxilla after colliding with a plate-glass window at the Monomotapa Hotel. A female, stunned when she flew into a plate-glass at the veterinary research laboratory, was treated and then trained successfully for falconry. She was subsequently used in captive breeding and had produced 30 young by the time she died at the age of 15 years. An adult female from a known breeding site in the city died after striking a plate glass window. She was soon replaced, indicating a healthy population around the city. The fourth victim was an immature female found dead inside the headquarters of Founders Building society. The employees, noticing a broken window with the shattered glass inside the office, suspected that the building had been broken into. Instead they found the body of the Peregrine, which had managed to smash through the plate-glass eight millimetres thick! It is almost certain that it struck the window during a high-speed chase after prey.

Another hazard of urban life for Peregrines is being shot at, as they sometimes are when they attack pigeons at lofts. I was sent the carcass of an immature male Siberian Peregrine that had been peppered with bird shot at the Borrowdale racecourse in Harare. It was only the third specimen of the species for Zimbabwe: in 1960 a museum collector took an adult male (chasing a Hadedda Ibis) near Birchenough Bridge, and in 1981 a falconer was given an immature male that had been rescued from the protective net screen over a radar mast at Thornhill Air Base.

Records of prey items taken by Peregrines in Zimbabwe include 79 species of birds. By number, the largest proportion, 39 percent, were doves and pigeons, while rollers, hoopoes and hornbills made up nine percent, starlings also nine percent, swifts five percent, and small seedeaters 11 percent. Birds as large as an adult Helmeted Guineafowl have been reported, but the most unusual prey item was an unidentified bream, recovered from a pellet in a nest which had three young! Insect-eating bats are also a great attraction for the Peregrine, especially as both the bats and the falcons are active during crepuscular hours. As little evidence of these small bats remains at feeding points (other than from pellets), the significance of this prey may be underestimated.

Brightly coloured birds such as rollers are an obvious target for the Peregrine, but flocks of Red-billed Queleas are also a great attraction, and queleas can figure significantly in its diet. Hunting large flocks requires a deliberate strategy, whereby the Peregrine stoops at, but not through, the mass of bird, trying to split some away as clear and unprotected targets. Several attempts are usually necessary, as the prey tries to bunch together.

Peregrines are renowned for their stoop, which they can start from a height of 300m or more. It seems that few prey species are able to detect them at this height, and once, bullet-like, the falcon is on its way, it is often too late for its quarry to

escape, even if it has spotted its attacker. In level pursuit chases too, Peregrines are fearsome hunters, generating a great turn of speed which they can maintain for relatively long distances. Some pursuits continue high into the sky in what falconers' term 'ringing flight'. I watched enthralled one afternoon as an adult male engaged a Crowed Plover, locking on like a missile. The slower-flying plover used its superior agility to great effect, evading each strike as it mounted to some 150 meters before descending in a series of elastic stoops and throw-outs, the Peregrine just too fast and headlong to match it as they eventually planed over the bushy surface and out of sight. The falcon can be out-maneuvered by other prey species too. I have watched a trained Peregrine fly itself to exhaustion in pursuit of an African Hoopoe, a particularly slow-flying bird which more than makes up for its apparent disadvantage by its ability to stall and flit above the speedy falcon. A fieldworker described a similar result when a pair of adult Peregrines in the wild pursued an African Hoopoe in tandem.

Waterholes, springs and cattle feedlots often attract enormous numbers of small birds and doves, and these in turn attract Peregrines. One Peregrine nest site is just 12 kilometers from a feedlot and either of the adults can be seen almost daily at this spot, which hosts thousands of doves. Some Peregrines, however, travel as far as 20 kilometers from their nests for food. This occurs in Parts of the Save River, I have observed several times a pair of Peregrines flying in from the mountains east of the river where there are known to be eyries, and on one occasion I witnessed a pair cooperatively hunt a Cape Turtle Dove before the female made the kill and took it into a dead tree to feed. In the same location one of my trained Peregrines was able to poach a Double-banded Sandgrouse from a wild Peregrine. The Save area has seen a decline in the Peregrine population over the past 20 years and some traditional nest sites now host Lanners.

In Zimbabwe Peregrines nest on cliffs, although there is a single record of a tree-nesting near Masvingo. This is highly questionable, probably a result of confusion with the Lanner which often uses old stick nests in trees. High cliffs are favored, but many nests have also been found on modest ones, where there is as little as 30 meters of vertical cliff face. In fact a few sites were virtual 'walk-ons', even in areas populated by baboons which are likely predators. One nest was located in an old antbear hole on an incline above a 100-metre cliff, where there were other, more traditional nesting sites. Another pair used an open ledge just half a metre below an easily traversed knife-edge ridge where an observer nearly stood on a chick. On a 30-metre-high cliff a pair nested in a small hole just below the top. As all of these sites fledged young, the Peregrines clearly relied on their cunning to escape detection. Sheltered ledges, especially cavities and caves, are preferred sites.

Eggs are usually laid from the end of July to early September. Two to four are laid in a scrape of dirt, or sometimes in an old stick nest that previously belonged to a Black Eagle or Black Stork. The female is particularly defensive of the site, making frenzied attacks on intruders (including human ones) when it has young. The chicks usually fledge towards the end of October and remain around the nesting area for a further six to eight weeks, but this can vary. Watching fledged young Peregrines frolic around the nest can be a wonderful experience, as I discovered early one December when, in the Zambezi Valley, I was treated to some expansive acrobatics from three juvenile Peregrines at their eyrie site. Exploiting the immense updrafts against the cliff during mid-afternoon, the youngsters were totally uninhibited as they swept above the cliff directly in front of me. Randomly they folded their wings and stooped some 300 metres towards the woodland below, then swung up in a tight arch, sitting on their tails.

On another occasion, when I was scrutinizing a Teita nest site in the Batoka Gorge below Victoria Falls, the wailing call of young falcons attracted my attention. A x20 spotting 'scope revealed four fledged birds around a ledge near the top of the cliff, but they were Peregrines! Just then an adult Teita was spotted flying across the gorge towards the young Peregrines, two of which engaged the diminutive Teita, chasing it around a huge columnar bluff. The Teita eventually went into its eyrie, just 300 meters from that of the Peregrine.

In the course of many years spent surveying and monitoring falcon populations in Zimbabwe's Zambezi Valley, I have often been entranced by the acrobatic and exciting flight of Peregrines. Sadly, with the loss of large areas of woodland in the region due to the influx of subsistence farmers into the Valley, it seems that Lanner Falcons may well continue to expand their range there at the expense of the Peregrines and Taigas.

PEREGRINE FALCONS IN AFRICA

Five races of Peregrine Falcons occur in Africa: the nominate European Peregrine *Falco peregrinus peregrinus* is a vagrant to the Mediterranean region of North Africa; the Siberian Peregrine *F. p. calidus* migrates to East and southern Africa during the southern summer; the Barbary Falcon *F. p. pelegrinoides*, a desert race of North Africa, sometimes extends as far south as northern Kenya; the Mediterranean Peregrine *F. p. brookei* is resident in northern Kenya; and the African Peregrine *F. p. minor* is a resident of Africa south of the Sahara.

The African race is one of the smallest of the 19 subspecies, with males weighing about 500 grams and females about 750 grams. Relatively little has been published on it, and its status has been largely misunderstood. Recent work in Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and East Africa, however, shows that the Peregrine is not especially rare. With the encouragement of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM), and support from The Peregrine Fund Inc. (USA), the Zimbabwe Falconers' Club (ZFC) has taken the lead and researching the status and ecology of the Peregrine in its area. The study includes examining the impact of pesticides, and it has pioneered the captive breeding and release of the African race, with more than 70 releases to date. Ron Hartley is the research co-ordinator of the ZFC.

(Comment by Africa – Birds and Birding.)



OBSERVATIONS ON BLACK SPARROWHAWK BEHAVIOUR AROUND THEIR NEST SITE

Zayin Vermaak

For the past four seasons I have had the privilege of monitoring a Black Sparrow hawk nest site at the foot of our 10-hectare property. The nest is situated in a stand of Blue gum trees lining a small stream that flows year-round. It is a relatively undisturbed area, which has partly made this nest site a success over the last few seasons. With the abundance of feral and Rock Pigeons in the neighboring residential area, food is not a problem throughout the year. To my knowledge the nest site was previously unknown to anyone and no records have been kept as to how many successful broods have been raised in the past. From the look of the nest it seems to have been used for a number of seasons. In the 2005 season the pair rebuilt a new nest in the same stand of gums due to the continual pressure from Egyptian Geese that claimed the original nest site for breeding rights that season. The pair still raised three chicks that season despite all the disruptions and late start. So all in all over the last four seasons the pair has raised 10 chicks successfully and of that 2 have been taken for Falconry purposes, both birds being great hunting birds.

The Egyptian Geese seem to be the Black Sparrow hawks continual archrival. As soon as the breeding season rolls around there is competition for the nest site from the word go. To the point where in the 2007 season the Black spars were forced back to their original nest and the Egyptian Geese totaling four pairs at one stage squabbled for the remaining nest. The Geese managed one brood and as soon as the nest was available again the competition between the remaining pairs was so fierce that they ended up demolishing the whole nest and none of them ended up breeding there for the rest of that season. This in my eyes not being a bad thing at all excepting for the loss of the nest. I guess it was just due to the intensity of aggression between the pairs for the nest that made them rip it apart. The size of the Geese and their dominant nature coupled with the realization that Black spar nests make the perfect nest is a recipe for disaster as there is little the Black spars can do to defend it. The Geese seem to be thriving because of it, especially in Black Sparrow hawk habitat.

The behavior of the pair through the breeding season has always been interesting as I pick up something new each season. The most noticeable change was the change of female in the pair two seasons ago. The original female was a Melanistic bird, the reason for her disappearance was not known but she was replaced by the current female who has a normal phase coloring. Both birds being large and aggressive females. The Musket is a Hellenistic bird with only a touch of white on his throat. The pair's noticeable courtship period to nesting has always been around 7 days, with a lot of vocal aerial displays above and around the stand of gums. An interesting observation made also during this period was foot clutching and spiraling over the nest site. On two occasions this unusual act happened about two days before the first egg was laid. The pair would lock talons and do half turn spirals, then releasing and continuing flying. The display was monitored carefully and there was no evidence of food passing while this behavior was taking place.

The pair's provisionary behavior also goes through interesting changes in the breeding season. Though incubation, done almost solely by the female, the Musket will hunt

mainly doves, pigeons and starlings over the residential area. From the time the chicks are about two weeks old the female will join the daily hunt, which commenced normally very early in the morning, and anything feathered in the vicinity would be hunted. Over and above their usual diet of doves and pigeons they caught anything from our young free-range rabbits to the resident Paradise Flycatcher, all just to satisfy the bottomless pit in the nest. With the chicks now having fledged and chasing their parents around the stand of gums screaming demandingly, food provision now changed to the teaching of hunting techniques. What the parents were now doing was waiting for the time of day when I would open my pigeon loft and with an unexpected attack take a pigeon off the loft roof. These were normally the young unsuspecting pigeons that were caught and swiftly whisked away to the stand of gums. A short period later you would hear the desperate screaming of chicks as the food was brought in. Thinking that I had now lost another one of my pigeons to the Black spars I would close up my pigeons to avoid any more being taken. To my amazement a short while later the pigeon arrived back at the loft bearing some nasty battle wounds. The first time this happened I put it down to a very lucky pigeon that would live to fight another day, but it started happening again and again till the point where my loft was full of badly injured birds but none had been killed! Although I never personally witnessed it happen, I strongly believe, and so do many other Falconers that the parents would purposefully take live but now disabled quarry to the nest area and release it for the developing chicks to try and catch. The chicks not being successful would allow the pigeon to get away and make it back home. Knowing how efficient and deadly the pair of Black spars are at hunting there would be no way that the pigeons were breaking free from their talons and making it back to the loft time and again. So my conclusion is that Black Sparrow hawks will bring and release disabled quarry at the nest site for the chicks to try and catch in the time period while teaching the chicks to hunt and fend for themselves.



IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW THREATENED OR PROTECTED SPECIES REGULATIONS FOR FALCONRY

Julius Koen
Cape Falconry Club

The new Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) regulations under the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act has been published and is effective from 1 February 2008. The development of the regulations and the lists of species has been a long and confusing process, inadequately guided by the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT). The regulations were supposed to come into force during June 2007, but through various problems highlighted by the conservation authorities and interest groups, it was postponed to February 2008. The identified problems have already resulted in two revisions of the regulations (although DEAT stated up front that the regulations will not be revised) with further revisions envisaged.

Although I work for a conservation authority, I must state up front that the conservation authorities, in general, are not very happy with the regulations as implementation is confusing and will place a tremendous financial and manpower burden on the authorities. So, don't shoot me, I am only the messenger. I can also just add that I, with the help of Adrian Lombard, was actively involved in stating the case for falconry and pointing out implementation problems. At the time of writing it is also not clear how certain of the sections will be interpreted for implementation by the conservation authorities as they are awaiting guidance from DEAT.

The following species of interest to falconry are listed (all as Vulnerable): Tawny Eagle, Martial Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. This document therefore only covers those species. It is of interest to note that no sub-species of the Peregrine Falcon are listed and it is, therefore, implied that all sub-species are included. None of the traditional prey species for falconry are listed and would not affect hunting by falconers. To date DEAT could not supply the criteria used for listing a species. This is confusing as it is not clear why the Peregrine Falcon, for instance, should be listed as they are fairly common and, in my opinion, not threatened. If there are no clear criteria, how would you ever know that conservation actions have been sufficient for delisting a species or to decide when to add a new species to the list? The way forward on the Peregrine Falcon would be for SAFA to obtain specialist inputs on their numbers and conservation status and submit a detailed case to DEAT to de-list the species.

As stated above, the interpretation and implementation of the regulations is confusing and will most probably lead to provinces implementing the regulations differently. We will once again end up with nine different interpretations instead of streamlining the process. In the case of the Peregrine Falcon, some provinces do not allow the flying of exotics, which could be problematic for easy cross-border movement.

Here are some of the key sections in the regulations of importance to falconry, commercial exhibition and rehabilitation that are in force from 1 February 2008 which would require permits from the provincial conservation authorities:

1. If you presently have a valid permit for keeping or breeding a listed species, you will have to apply for a new permit within six months i.e. before 1 August 2008.
2. Section 5(5): Any person may apply for a possession permit for having or conveying a listed specimen of a threatened or protected species or a product or derivative of a listed threatened or protected species in his or her possession, if that person does not intend to carry out any other restricted activity with that specimen.
Possession permits may be valid for 50 years (Section 22 1(b)). This is ridiculous for control over live specimens and provinces will most probably reduce the period of validity e.g. to three years.
3. Section 20(1): A permit issued for live specimens of listed threatened or protected species is only valid within the area of jurisdiction of the issuing authority or for the specific locality where the restricted activity involving the specimen of a listed threatened or protected species will take place, except for a possession permit, a personal effects permit or a nursery possession permit.
My impression is that falconers will receive possession permits and may therefore move e.g. peregrines around the country. This could, however, be a problem as some provinces will not allow the non-SA peregrine subspecies. According to implementation suggestions by DEAT, possession permits for live specimens will be valid only in the area of jurisdiction. Permits (import and export) will still be required for the inter-provincial transport of listed falconry birds.
4. Section 20(2): A permit issued for a dead or processed specimen of listed threatened or protected species or a product or derivative derived from a listed threatened or protected species is valid throughout the Republic.
As permits will be required for products or derivatives of listed species, even things like feathers will have to be permitted. How it will be implemented is not clear as with feathers you may use some during the validity period of the permit or get new ones during the molt. Maybe a register of some kind will suffice where changing numbers are indicated.
5. Section 27 (1): No person may operate a captive breeding operation, commercial exhibition facility, nursery, scientific institution, sanctuary, rehabilitation facility or act as a wildlife trader involving specimens of any listed threatened or protected species, unless that breeding operation, commercial exhibition facility, nursery, scientific institution, sanctuary, rehabilitation facility or wildlife trader is registered in terms of this Chapter with the issuing authority.
If you breed e.g. peregrines (or do any of the other activities listed above), you must register your facility. The definition for captive breeding implies breeding in a controlled environment for commercial or conservation purposes. I have raised the concern various times that some falconers breed birds for own use (and therefore not for conservation or commercial purpose).

Must a breeding facility still be registered in that case? Clarify with your conservation authority.

Trade is included in the definition of "commercial purposes" and it, therefore, implies that you may not give or donate any bird bred at a breeding facility – you may only sell it if the facility is registered for the purpose. Confusing!

6. Section 35. A registration certificate issued in respect of a captive breeding operation, rehabilitation facility and a commercial exhibition facility must be subject to a condition that the person to whom the registration certificate is granted to, must -

- (a) prevent hybridization and or inbreeding.

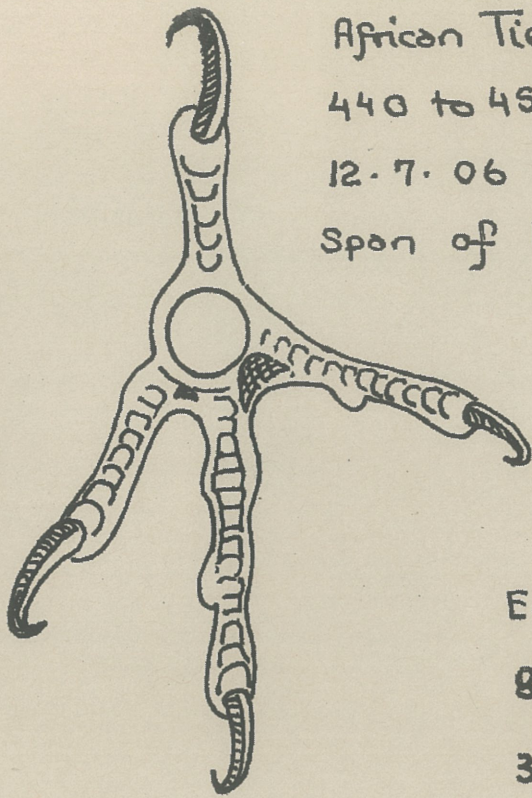
No hybridization of any listed species (e.g. peregrines) will be allowed.

7. Section 26 (2) (c). Traps are prohibited hunting methods except for scientific, veterinary or management purpose. DEAT could not clarify the use of traps (e.g. balchatri) for the trapping of birds for falconry purposes. Clarify with own conservation authority if you will be allowed to trap peregrines (or the other listed species) with traps. It will be open to their interpretation of the regs.

I think the biggest challenge for us is to get the Peregrine Falcon de-listed to circumvent all these problems. Implementation of the TOPS regulations will be discussed between SAFA and the conservation authorities at the field meet in July. It is, therefore, important that we get as many of the conservation authorities as possible at the meet. Letters of invitation will go to the conservation authorities, but clubs should also lobby on a provincial basis to get the authorities involved. Hopefully we will have more clarity on implementation by then. If any additional information becomes available in the near future, I will circulate it. My suggestion is for all provincial clubs to approach their conservation authorities to specifically clarify the implementation of TOPS regarding falconry.

These TOPS regulations are also relevant for rehabilitation centers, sanctuaries and exhibition facilities.

You are welcome to contact me on jkoen@half.ncape.gov.za for electronic copies of the Biodiversity Act and TOPS regulations. It is in your own interest to be aware of the implications of the Act and to ensure compliance so that the future of falconry is not jeopardized



African Tiercel.

440 to 450 grammes

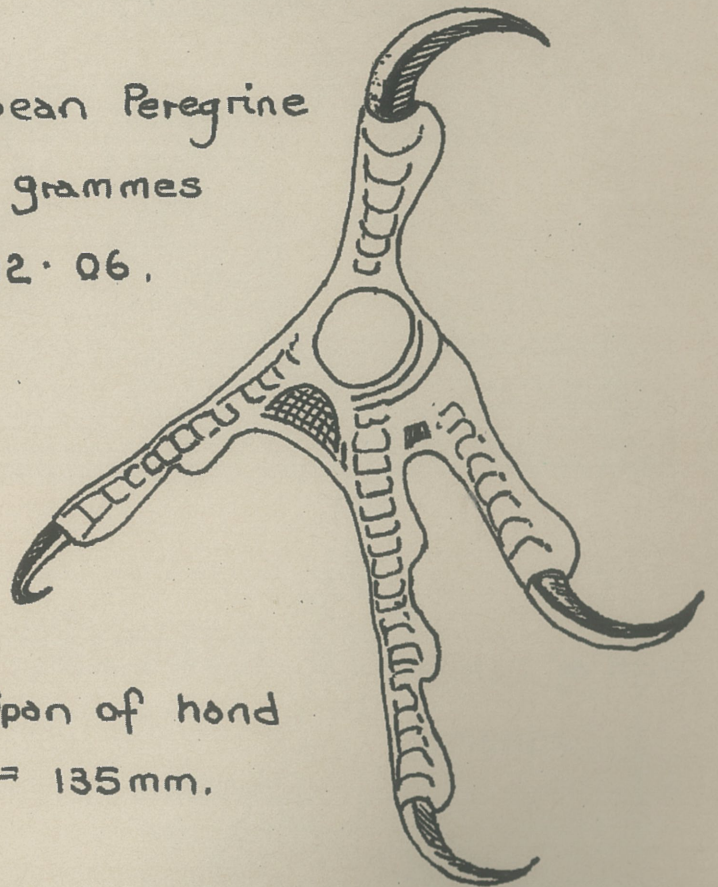
12.7.06

Span of hand = 103mm.

European Peregrine

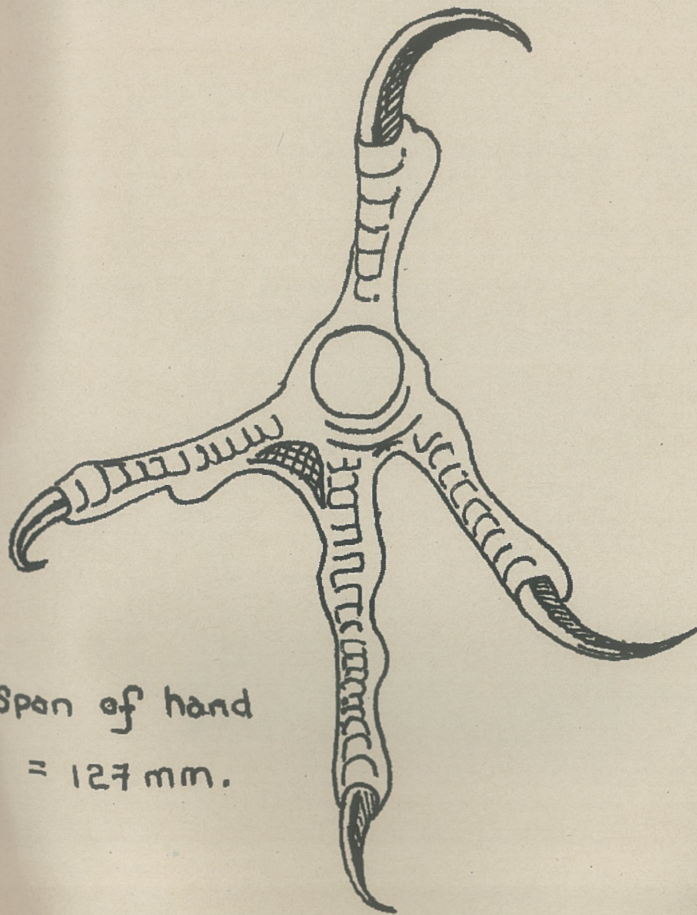
850 grammes

30.12.06.



Span of hand

= 135mm.



Span of hand

= 127mm.

African Peregrine

715 to 720 grammes

29.7.06.

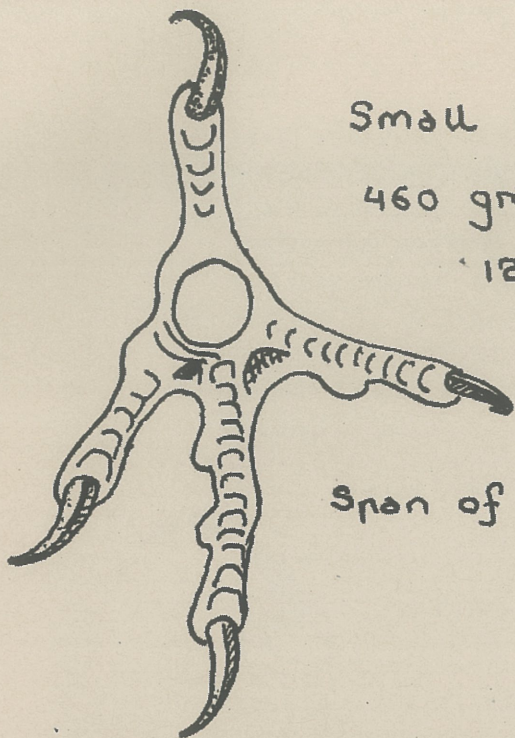
0 8cm

Scale = 1 to 1.

Small Lannerette.

460 grammes

12.07.06

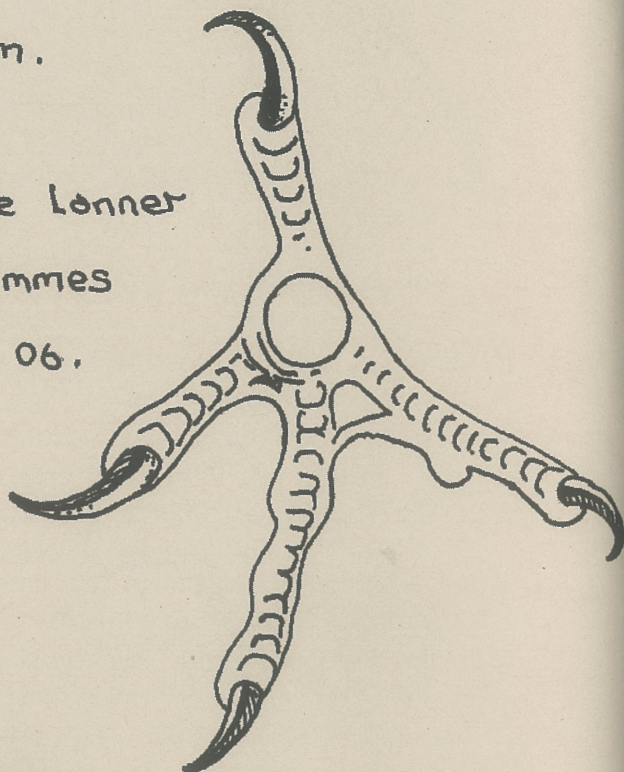


Span of hand = 93mm.

Passage Lanner

573 grammes

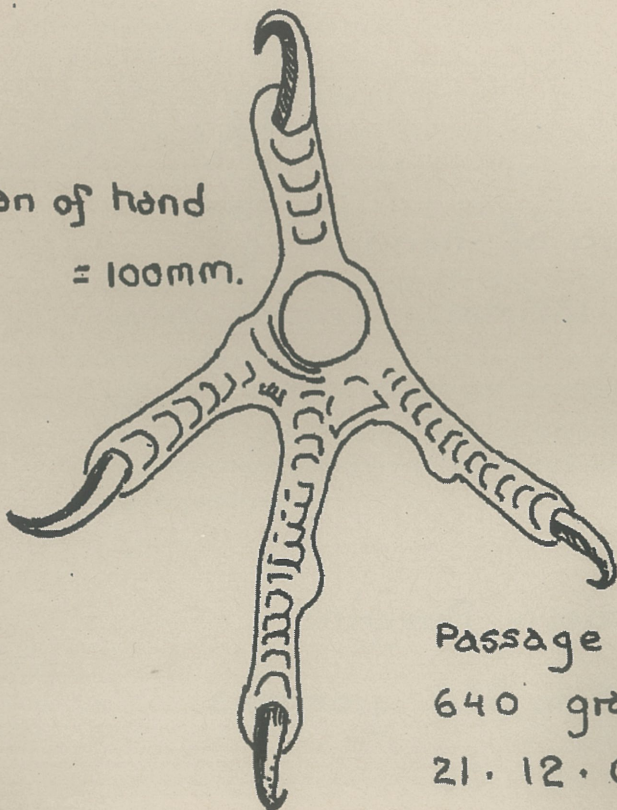
12.07.06.



Span of hand 102 mm.

Span of hand

= 100mm.



Passage Lanner

640 grammes

21.12.06.

0 8cm.

Scale 1 to 1.

2008.

F10
PRODUCTS

ANIMAL HEALTH



BIOSECURITY
INFECTION CONTROL
TREATMENTS

F10
PRODUCTS



Health and Hygiene

Health and Hygiene (Pty) Ltd
PO Box 347, Sunninghill, 2157, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 474 1688 • Fax: +27 11 474 1670
www.healthandhygiene.co.za

GET THE BEST FOR YOUR BEST FRIENDS!

Merlin Systems Inc.

Quality Falconry Tracking Equipment



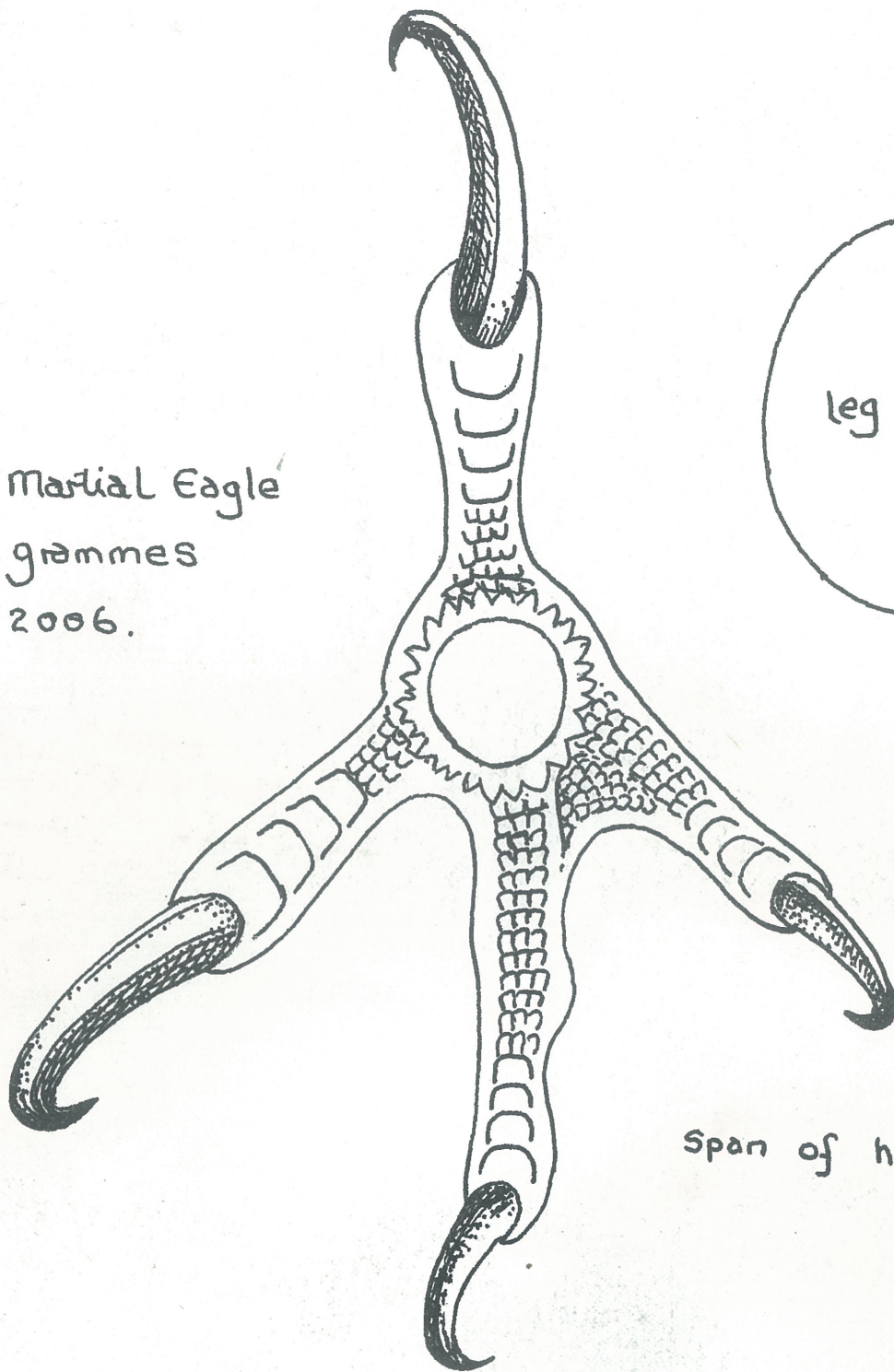
**RUGGED
RELIABLE
POWERFUL
SMALL SIZE
AFFORDABLE
VERY EFFICIENT
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED**

MERLIN SYSTEMS, INC.
P.O. BOX 190257 BOISE ID 83719
PH: (208)362-2254 FAX: (208)362-2140
e-mail: info@merlin-systems.com
www.merlin-systems.com

To Order Call Toll Free 1-866-742-8475

South African Agent: Cliff Dearden, Tel: 033 386 6522 Cell: 082 846 1541

Juv. ♂ Martial Eagle
3080 grammes
21. 12. 2006.



leg muscle

Span of hand = 200 mm

0 10cm.

Scale 1 to 1.

JH 2008.